

MONEY SAVING SECRETS OF A TRAVEL JUNKIE



*How to Save Big Money
on Air Travel, Cruises,
Lodging & More....*

by Stephen Linder ©

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Introduction:

My wife and I are avid travelers. In the past ten years, we have traveled outside the country many times. We've taken several cruises, stayed at luxury resorts and have been on over 10 rail excursions, including the Orient Express yet we did all this travel for much less than most other people paid. We own a tour company that provides property tours for clients interested in owning a second home, vacation property, rental property or retirement home in Costa Rica. You can see our company online at www.PacificLots.com.

My background: I studied international business in both undergraduate and grad school and most of my working life has involved various elements of travel. I am internet savvy and have been so since the internet first evolved. I have taken many vacations at a much lower cost than most people have thought possible. Recently while speaking at a seminar for International Living, someone suggested I write down what I have learned and share it with others. Here is a collection of tips and techniques I've learned over the years. If you take the time to work with them, they are guaranteed to save you money over and over again.

- How would you like to stay in a suite at the Four Seasons Resort, in Carlsbad, CA in a two bedroom suite for just \$249 for the week? This suite came complete with remote operated gas fireplaces, 40 inch flat screen TV's in each room and had two bedrooms with king sized beds, two and a half baths, a washer and dryer and a full kitchen with granite counters.
- Or maybe you'd prefer staying in an Oceanside suite in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico. This hotel charged \$279 per night for the room yet we stayed there for \$299 for seven nights!
- Imagine flying first class from Boston to Mexico and having the airline give you a \$600 cash voucher, after only having paid \$379 for the round trip ticket. The airline also put me up in the Marriott for a night and included a free dinner and breakfast as well.
- We also paid \$349 per ticket, round trip, from Boston to Puerto Rico and the airline put us on a direct, earlier flight and gave us \$2000 in cash vouchers which we used for two years of flights.

- We booked a 4 star hotel in Scottsdale, AZ in December, 2008 for only \$59 per night!
- In 2006 we traveled from Key West, FL to Maui, HI round trip on American Airlines for only \$10 per person!
- In 2003 we took a seven day cruise on Norwegian Cruise Lines out of Miami for only \$299 per person.
- We have received thousands of dollars in vouchers and free tickets from major airlines.
- In 2006 I took a 17 day tour of the Rocky Mountains, visiting Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona and Utah. I visited seven national parks on the trip, four national monuments, took six antique train rides and stayed in a private room in great hotels every night. My round trip airfare was paid in full from Key West, FL to Denver, CO and all of my meals and expenses were paid for as well. I did this by volunteering to be a guide for a travel company.
- I toured the Grand Canyon and Sedona, Arizona in 2008 as a guide and again had all my meals, expenses and airfare paid. I received over \$500 in tips from the passengers.
- How about a four day train ride through northern California and Oregon for free, including all airfare, meals and lodging?

All these stories are true. Each one came as a result of careful planning and paying attention to details. With a bit of foresight, some good luck and the right timing, these opportunities are easier to come by than most people are aware. In this book I will reveal some little known ways to make travel almost pay for itself.

Stephen Linder

Disclaimer:

Some of the tips and suggestions contained in this publication skirt the intent of travel service providers. Use these tips at your own risk. The author does not accept any responsibility or offer any guarantees that a method included in this publication will work as suggested.



Air Travel

How fares are determined: Fares are a factor of flight schedule, date and destination. Fuel costs are often playing a bigger role these days as well. Fares set by the airlines combine factors of schedule, date, time of day, number of connections, available cheap seat and award class seating, etc... to determine the cost of a given seat on an airline. Airlines constantly watch their competitors pricing and adjust prices accordingly.

Fares in the US and Canada are filed with an organization called ATPCO (Airline Tariff Publishing Company) based in Washington, DC. ATPCO was originally a government regulatory board but after industry deregulation in the 1970's it is now owned by a number of airlines. Fares are filed with ATPCO three times per day and once on weekends. ATPCO releases fare information to various travel consolidators such as Expedia, Travelocity, Orbitz, etc... at 10:00 am, 12:30 pm and 8:00 pm each day. Fares are released once per day at 5:00 pm on the weekends. (All times are Eastern Standard Time). It then takes anywhere from a few minutes to a few hours before these fares are updated into the various travel consolidator's websites.

Booking airfare: What is a good price? A good strategy is to book a good value fully refundable fare early while continuing to look for a great deal elsewhere. You can always cancel the refundable ticket later. Often the best deals are offered directly on the airline's website and may not be found on a travel consolidator site such as Expedia, Orbitz, Kayak or Travelocity. Ridiculously low airfare at the last minute to your choice of destinations is basically a myth. You occasionally will see the route you want on last minute specials, but trying to buy specific routes last minute for cheap is nearly impossible. Last minute fare alerts or getaway specials are widely available however, they will likely not be to where you want or need to go. Fare Alerts and Getaways are great last minute deals offered only to people who have signed up in advance. You will need to sign up with each specific airline to get receive these alerts but in exchange you can great specials on last minute deals at incredible prices.

Days that airlines release their last minute sale fares: Sign up in advance to get alerts to these sales and be ready to book when you see them.

Mondays

- Alaska (domestic travel for this weekend)
- America West ("Sports" fares for domestic travel this weekend)

Tuesdays

- Aeromexico (international travel for this weekend, next weekend, and beyond)
- American (domestic and international travel for this weekend, next weekend, and beyond)

- Continental (domestic travel for this weekend)
- Delta (domestic travel for this weekend)
- Southwest (domestic travel at least 21 days in the future)
- United (domestic and international travel for this weekend, next weekend, and beyond)

Wednesdays

- America West (domestic travel for this weekend and next weekend)
- Frontier (domestic travel for this weekend)
- Northwest (domestic travel for this weekend)
- Spirit (domestic travel for this weekend, next weekend, and beyond)
- US Airways (domestic travel for this weekend)

Airfares are filed in a ladder fashion, priced lowest to highest between city pair. Airlines would prefer to sell the highest price seats first but consumers prefer the opposite. Airlines offer about 20 different price points based on various rules used to restrict fares on the lowest priced seats. Rules include passenger type, day, time, season, advance purchase, minimum and maximum stay, travel periods, sales restrictions, award tickets, etc... These rules determine the price you pay for a particular city pair in relation to the rules you comply with. Keep in mind that these fares change three times per day and you can understand why there can be differences of \$1000's of dollars on the same airfare between the same city pairs on the same day.

Days in advance of purchase also has influence over available ticket prices. Generally 21 days, 14 days and 7 days before your flight will invoke progressively higher fares as the day of the flight draws near.

Large Internet Travel Sites:

Expedia www.expedia.com - Operated by Microsoft – a small fee is added to your booking, typically \$5 per booked ticket.

Travelocity www.travelocity.com - Operated by Sabre and American Airlines, also adds a small fee.

Orbitz www.orbitz.com - Owned by an alliance of airlines.

Priceline www.priceline.com - This is a reverse auction software that allows you to bid on a given flight. You have to release credit card information prior to bidding and if your bid is accepted, you are stuck with it. You pick the date of the trip but can't specify the time. Although you may pay less for a ticket, you may end up traveling at ungodly times with multiple connections through obscure cities, adding to your travel time. Try bidding ½ of the lowest published fare, increasing your bid by 10% each time.

Hotwire www.hotwire.com - Hotwire doesn't reveal the name of the hotel you are booking with, rental car company, nor the airline or schedule. You can't make changes or get refunds so be careful about what you ask for.

Kayak www.kayak.com Kayak bought Sidestep, a similar competitor. Kayak uses a meta search engine that is very complete and searches some of the more obscure airlines. Once you have found a flight you want, you are redirected to one of the major travel sites for booking, such as Expedia. Kayak gets paid for clicks, referring clients who purchase for a small commission.

Travelweb www.travelweb.com - Part of Pegasus Systems

Trip.com www.trip.com another consolidation site, owned by Galileo/Apollo
Also check out Yahoo Farechase at www.farechase.yahoo.com.

Student Discount and Budget Consolidators: A few consolidators exist who offer discount tickets by purchasing bulk, working with charter airlines and other discount channels. Check these firms if you are traveling an often beaten path route such as London, Paris etc. In many cases, you don't need to be a student to purchase through these companies.

www.sta-travel.com Originally known as Student Travel Australia, they are now one of the larger student discount brokers with over 200 offices worldwide. Their main US office is located in New York City and they can be reached at 212-627-3111 or try them toll free at 888-777-0112.

www.Travelcuts.com – a Canadian based wholesaler who offers some great deals. Great for Canadian buyers – Their main office is in Toronto and their contact information is 187 College St., Toronto, Ontario M5T1P7. Their telephone is 416-979-2406.

www.ciee.org - Council charter operates many European charter flights during the summer months. They specialize in student and budget. They can be reached at 212-661-1414 or 800-800-8222

How to know what is a good price for a ticket:

A great site that constantly analyzes these rules is www.farecompare.com. It will help you find the lowest fare as well as let you know what the range of fares has been over the past few years, including a 30 day ticker for comparison. Knowing what is a good fare is the first step toward actually getting one. Once a good fare is found, I recommend you go directly to the airline's site to book the fare to avoid the travel fare consolidator's fee being added to your fare. Do not wait since great fares usually don't last long.

Check Fare Compare to know what was the best price last year as well as when was the best time to buy the lowest ticket. Though it may not be the same this year, using last year's low point is likely to be a good indicator of what a fare will be at a given time this year.

Flight Schedules: Flight Schedules are printed by OAG (Official Airline Guide) www.oag.com and Quicktrip www.quicktrip.com. These schedules act as the guide for all airlines and travel sites and are updated a few times per week as well as daily for cancellations or other unscheduled changes. These schedules are used in coordination to the rates filed with ATPCO to determine how many seats are available at given fares. Schedule guides use aircraft equipment information to determine how many seats are available for a given flight and at which price categories.

Seat Inventory: Airlines use a large statistical model to determine seat availability at various fare rates. Each airline uses a sophisticated program to maximize "yield management", the price paid for available seats on a given flight. These programs use both real time and historic data to set prices in a real time dynamic environment.

Hubs: Airlines have moved from a fragmented form of schedule to a hub and spoke schedule over the past 10 years. With a hub and spoke schedule, airlines route their flights through a few primary (hub) cities to consolidate passengers and help fill long haul routes between hubs. Long-range seat capacity continues to increase while spoke routes have remained the same. Lower costs result for the airlines since fewer gates are needed at spoke cities and major service components such as maintenance or meal prep can be located along the hubs instead of scattered throughout the country. Nearly 80% of all national flights originate or terminate at a hub city these days. New York and London are the two largest hubs internationally and lower airfare can often be found at these hubs. Knowing where hub cities are located and what airlines use what hubs can help in saving money on airfare. Travel hub to hub is referred to as a trunk route and larger aircraft are used for these routes. Trunk to 2nd routes use mid size aircraft while 2nd to 2nd typically uses smaller aircraft. Most airlines have a partner or commuter line to feed into their trunk lines.

Flying to a hub will often be expensive if the airline you are flying has a monopoly on the gates at that hub. You would think it would be the other way around, that the hub would be less expensive. Supply and demand is what airlines use to determine price and if they are the only airline serving a particular city, they sometimes use that to their advantage. The justice department is currently investigating several airlines for taking advantage of monopoly conditions at hubs they service. Delta has been accused of this practice for flights in and out of Atlanta.

Here are the airline codes of the US Carriers and their web addresses

AS	Alaska Airlines	http://www.alaskaair.com/
AA	American Airlines	http://www.aa.com/
FL	AirTran	http://www.airtran.com/
CO	Continental Airlines	http://www.continental.com/
DL	Delta Airlines	http://www.delta.com/
HA	Hawaiian Airlines	http://www.hawaiianair.com/
B6	Jet Blue	http://www.jetblue.com/
YX	Midwest Airlines	http://www.midwestairlines.com/
NW	Northwest Airlines	http://www.nwa.com/
WN	Southwest Airlines	http://www.southwest.com/
UA	United Airlines	http://www.united.com/
US	U S Airways	http://www.usairways.com/

Here is a list of hubs and the airlines that use them

ABQ Albuquerque, NM	WN
ANC Anchorage, AK.....	AS
ATL Atlanta, GA.....	DL
BNA Nashville, TN.....	AA
BOS Boston, MA.....	NW
BWI Baltimore, MD.....	US
CLE Cleveland, OH.....	CO
CLT Charlotte, NC.....	US
CVG Cincinnati, OH.....	DL
DAL Dallas (Love Field), TX.....	WN
DEN Denver, CO.....	UA
DFW Dallas/Ft. Worth, TX.....	AA, DL
DTW Detroit, MI	NW
EWR Newark, NJ.....	CO
HOU Houston (Hobby), TX.....	WN
IAD Washington (Dulles), DC.....	UA
IAH Houston (Intercontinental), TX.....	CO
IND Indianapolis, IN.....	US
JFK New York (Kennedy), NY.....	DL
LAX Los Angeles.....	DL, US
MEM Memphis, TN.....	NW
MIA Miami, FL	AA
MKE Milwaukee, WI.....	NW, YX
MSP Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN.....	NW

MSY New Orleans, LA..... CO
 ORD Chicago, IL..... AA, UA
 MCO Orlando, FL..... DL
 PHL Philadelphia, PA..... US
 PHX Phoenix, AZ..... WN
 PIT Pittsburgh, PA..... US
 RDU Raleigh/Durham, NC..... AA
 SEA Seattle, WA..... AS, UA
 SFO San Francisco, CA..... UA, US
 SJC San Jose, CA..... AA
 SJU San Juan, PR..... AA
 SLC Salt Lake City, UT..... DL
 SYR Syracuse, NY..... US

FOREIGN AIRLINE CODES
 Arranged by Country (Partial Listing)

Country	Code	Airline	Country	Code	Airline
Argentina	AR	Aerolineas Argentinas	Indonesia	GA	Garuda Indonesia
Australia	QF	Qantas	Ireland	EI	Aer Lingus
Austria	OS	Austrian Airlines	Israel	LY	El Al Israel Airlines
Brazil	RG	Varig	Italy	AZ	Alitalia
Canada	AC	Air Canada	Jamaica	JM	Air Jamaica
Chile	LA	Lan Airlines	Japan	JL	Japan Airlines
China	CI	China Airlines	Jordan	RJ	Royal Jordanian Airlines
Columbia	P5	Aerorepublica	Mexico	MX	Mexicana
Costa Rica	LR	Lacsa	Morocco	AT	Royal Air Maroc
Czech Republic	OK	CSA Czech Airlines	Netherlands	KL	KLM Royal Dutch
Ecuador	XL	Lan Ecuador	New Zealand	NZ	Air New Zealand
Egypt	MS	Egyptair	Peru	LP	Lan Peru
El Salvador	TA	Taca	Philippine Is.	PR	Philippine Airlines
England	BA	British Airways	Poland	LO	Lot Polish Airlines
Finland	AY	Finair	Russia	SU	Aeroflot
France	AF	Air France	Singapore	SQ	Singapore Airlines
Germany	LH	Lufthansa	Spain	IB	Iberia
Greece	AG	Aegean Airlines	Switzerland	LX	Swiss International Airlines
India	AI	Air India	Thailand	TG	Thai Airways

Follow this link to a list of discount airlines by city served, including airlines like Airtran, Jet Blue, ATA, Alegiant, Southwest, Spirit, Sun Country etc....

<http://www.airtimetable.com/lowfare-airline-results.asp>

Often there are regional or discount carriers that may service a route you are traveling at substantially less than the major carriers. We often travel to Costa Rica and Spirit Airlines offers discount service that you won't find on the major travel Portals. Use an internet search tool to find out who services a city. You can find a complete list of all worldwide airlines, their codes, routes, etc... on Fare Compare, www.farecompare.com.

Where to shop for low fares: Fare consolidators such as Orbitz, Travelocity, Expedia, etc... are the first place to start your search. Keep in mind that discount airlines such as Jet Blue, South West, Spirit, Martinair etc..., will not appear in most travel consolidators inventory. Check www.Kayak.com for searches through more airline choices. Once you have found the lowest price for a fare, go to that particular airline's site and book the ticket. **DO NOT BOOK THE TICKET ON A CONSOLIDATOR'S WEBSITE IF YOU CAN AVOID IT.** The reason being is that when you book a ticket directly on the site of the airline you are flying on, if there are changes in that flight or cancellations between the time you book the flight and when you actually are scheduled to fly, the airline will do their best to contact you to let you know. You also have recourse with the airline in the event the flight gets changed and you end up missing the flight. The large CRS (computer reservation companies) consolidators like Travelocity, Expedia or Orbitz may not even be aware a change was made to your flight time and will likely not notify you of the changes. Also do not believe the guarantees offered by these firms. We have been led to believe that Travelocity will make right any mistake they make but I can assure they will not when they make a large error. It is purely marketing when they claim to offer you their Travelocity guarantee.

Case Study: We were trying to book a resort in Panama, the Gamboa Rain-forest Resort, through Travelocity. While booking the hotel, their computer offered us a rate for five nights that was the same as when we requested just one night. It was my 50th birthday and the rate we were offered was what enticed us to take the trip in the first place, since we would save on hotels we could justify paying the airfare. A day after booking the trip, I received a call from Travelocity telling me they had made a mistake. They also told me the hotel was no longer available for the five nights and they would have to put me elsewhere. I quickly made another reservation at the same hotel for the same five nights through Expedia, although at a higher rate. This proved to me that Travelocity was just lying to me about availability to get

out of the “mistake” they had apparently made on the rate, since the hotel was available on other sites. When we arrived at the hotel, they saw the two reservations, the cancelled one through Travelocity and the second through Expedia. They listened to our story about what had happened and they gave us a great upgrade free of charge. Though I contacted Travelocity multiple times about their “Travelocity Guarantee” they never “made it right” or offered me any compensation for their mistake.



Internet booking pitfalls, pop up calendars, city codes, etc.... One thing to be aware of is the ease of booking travel online also provides ease of making mistakes. You have no one to blame if you book your flight incorrectly and most tickets require a change fee to correct them. Be sure you have the right airport codes, the right day in the right month before pushing the purchase button online. Be careful of things like am versus pm and watch out for pop up calendars that sometimes jump to the next month. Double check what you are buying before it is too late. Also watch out for flights that offer connections that require an overnight to complete. You will have to pay to sleep somewhere or end up sleeping at the airport as a last resort. Keep in mind that if you make a mistake while booking a flight, you can usually contact the airline directly and explain the mistake but you must do so within a couple of hours of the booking or they may not make the change without charging you an additional fee for doing so.

Popular Internet Fair Consolidator Site List

www.Travelocity.com

www.Expedia.com

www.Orbitz.com

www.kayak.com

www.cheaptickets.com

www.lowestfare.com

www.lastminutetravel.com

Popular Internet Auction Travel Sites

www.bid4vacations.com

www.Hotwire.com

www.Priceline.com

Change fees versus full fare: Full fare refundable tickets generally cost much more than the cost to change a ticket. Sometimes if you see a great fare, it is worth purchasing a non-refundable ticket well in the future with the intent of changing the ticket when you figure out when you need to use it. Be aware that airlines are catching on to this tactic and now some are charging both a flat change fee as well as the difference in the fare you paid for the ticket and the price the ticket is selling for if you purchased it today. You can also purchase a fully refundable ticket early on and then keep looking for a better deal, knowing you can always cancel the fully refundable ticket.

Fare alerts: Nearly every major carrier as well as some of the travel discount sites such as Kayak, Orbitz and Travel Zoo offer users the ability to set up fare watchers. Fare watchers keep tabs on the price of travel between various destinations. If the fare drops below a user-determined price, the fare watching software sends an email to the user to alert them of the fare. Savvy travelers set up fare alerts on the websites of all carriers that service the destinations they are interested in tracking. Tip: when a fare alert comes to you that you are interested in taking advantage of, do not wait. These fares are sometimes only offered for a few seats or a short time window and are often quickly snatched up by others watching the same route.

Net Saver specials or weekend discount offers: Similar to fare watchers are weekend alerts or net savers. Again many of the major carriers offer these specials. You must sign up to receive them but once signed up, you will receive regular specials, typically on both domestic and international fares, that take place at the last minute. American Airlines net saver specials require that you travel outbound on a Thursday through Saturday and return on the following Monday through Wednesday. Saver fares and specials are typically not offered during peak travel weekends like Thanksgiving and fare discounts vary depending on the season as well. The period with the least amount of travel is typically between the end of summer and Christmas, other than Thanksgiving weekend. Fares during this time of year are usually at their lowest rate.

Adjacent Cities: If you live near multiple airports, be sure to check fares at the various airports you can fly out of. In Boston for example, you should also check fares from Providence, RI, Manchester, NH and even New York City.

Savvy travelers know that both West Palm Beach and Fort Lauderdale are often cheaper alternatives to flying to or from Miami. Many booking sites now offer the option of checking fares at airports in the surrounding area to the one you are trying to book from.

Case Study: My daughter and I found a flight to the Dominican Republic from New York that made it worth traveling from Boston to New York to catch that flight. We took the Amtrak train from Boston coupled with the Cary Limousine service from Grand Central Station to JFK and saved hundreds of dollars versus flying out of Boston. The train trip added to the adventure and was an easy connect via public transportation from our house in Cambridge, MA.



Flexible booking dates: You will often find that fares change considerably by altering your travel dates. Many online sites give you the option of selecting “flexible travel dates” while searching. What you may find is that traveling on the day before or the day after you want to go may be significantly cheaper than traveling on the day you were looking for. Often it is cheaper to travel a day earlier and pay for a hotel if the ticket price is significantly less than on the day you’d hoped to travel on.

Special Offers: Many airlines release “special offers” that you will typically only be aware of if you visit that particular airlines own website. Many of these offers require that you sign up in advance of the offer to take advantage of it. If you are traveling to an exotic location such as Hawaii, Fiji or the Orient, it might pay to check the major carriers offering service to those locations for special offers that may be available. Sign up for all the airlines travel specials serving areas you frequently travel to. American airlines offers a service called “Net Saver Fares”. Continental, Delta, US Air and others also offer regular weekly email specials. You need to register to receive these alerts.

Tip: I suggest that you register for a Hotmail or other free email account and use this email address for all your travel alerts. This way you keep spam out of your regular email account and yet have a nice consolidated place with all your travel email info that you can check when you need to book tickets or other travel. Many of the major hotel chains, car rental companies and cruise ship lines offer similar alert services. Sign up for any that might be of interest or use to you.

Case Study: Some special offers require that you have registered for the offer prior to taking qualified flights. In 2005, American airlines offered a special deal during the winter months, on seats from Boston to Florida. I became aware of the offer while traveling through Logan Airport in Boston, where they had some American employees dressed in beach wear and perched on a tiny beach scene that they had made at the airport, complete with beach chairs and beach umbrellas. The special offered anyone flying twice from Boston to Florida on designated American flights to earn a travel certificate good for a round trip ticket anywhere worldwide that American

Airlines offered service (not including partner airlines). I looked up the offer online on American's website and pre-registered both my wife and myself prior to taking any flights from Florida to Boston or vice versa. I called American's service center and asked whether flights from Florida to Boston would also qualify towards the offer and was told that as long as I met the required number of flight legs, I would qualify. My wife and I flew from Key West to Boston in February. We returned from Key West to Boston on Easter weekend solely for the purpose of completing two round trips from Boston to Florida. Even though we traveled Florida to Boston, the airline computer system recognized the correct number of legs between Boston and Florida and we received the vouchers a few weeks after we completed the required paperwork. We used the vouchers a few months later to travel from Key West to Maui. Those two tickets would have cost nearly \$2000 yet we received them for free by paying attention to the various offers available from the airlines.



Free phone calls from the airport: If your flight is delayed, you can often make free phone calls from the customer service desk of the airline you are delayed on. Go to the courtesy desk of that airline and ask to use the courtesy phone. You can call nearly anywhere in the world for the next few minutes.

Delayed Flights: If you arrive on a delayed flight and know you have already missed your connection, take the time while waiting to de-plane and use your cell phone to call directly to your airline before the other passengers on your flight are trying to make new connections. If you contact the airline directly, you can book your connection before all the seats are gone. The airlines phone number is usually on the boarding pass. Furthermore, if you know that you are arriving to an airport that is being closed down for weather related closure, this is also a great time to call hotels or rental car companies to book your needs, before they are sold out. A good site to see delays is www.avoiddelays.com which not only shows delays but also ranks them in relation to the airports they occur in as well as frequent flights that are typically delayed.

Changing Flights: If you need to change a flight that is non-refundable, the sooner you make the change, the better, since your new fare will be based on the "current rate" as compared to the rate you originally paid for your ticket. Think about when you might be able to use the ticket for future flights, being sure you have chosen the correct dates to change the ticket to. Make the changes as soon as you realize you need to since you not

Tip: If you travel often, buy a set of noise cancelling headphones. These great devices make traveling much more comfortable by cancelling the noise of the engines. They also double as headsets to watch the movie if one is offered or to listen to the music or entertainment programs offered by most airlines. Keep in mind that you must turn off the electronic noise canceling feature until the plane has reached the 10,000 foot level, when the flight crew announces that it is now safe to use approved electronic devices. A good brand to buy is Jabra, considered to be the poor mans Bose. A good pair will set you back about \$75 versus \$300 or so for Bose. Check on Ebay or www.buy.com.

only pay a change fee, usually \$50 to \$75, depending on the airline but you will also need to pay the difference in fare, if there is one. Again the further in the future you can change the ticket to, the less it is likely to cost you, since rates for flights well into the future will likely be the least expensive. Also remember that if you fail to change a ticket before the scheduled departure date, though you have lost the value of the departure flight, you might still be able to salvage some of the value of the return flight if the date of the return has not already passed. Call your airline right away and change the ticket or request a refund on the unused portion.

Missed Flight: If you miss your flight and it is the same day, most airlines will allow you to board the next flight without paying an additional fee. You will however be traveling as a standby passenger and will only be given a seat if there is an

empty one available. If you miss your flight on a busy weekend or holiday, you may find that there are no empty seats. You will have to go to the gate of each new flight option and wait until the plane is boarded before they call the standby list. Tip: During busy times you might ask if any obscure connections have open seats available to reach your destination if all logical and convenient flights are over sold. The airline generally doesn't care how many legs they put you on to reach your destination so if you are willing to go to Denver from Atlanta via Cleveland and Chicago, you might consider doing so if you are out of direct flight options. Again you have to suggest options such as these to ticketing counter staff.

Weather related delays won't typically qualify you for any type of compensation or assistance. Delays or cancellations from weather can be caused either at departure or arrival destination or even from weather along the way if it affects your flight's ability to make safe travel. One trick that you can use for a weather related delay is to rebook your flight on the day of travel, paying the change fee to book for the next day. You avoid flying during bad weather and you increase your chances of getting a "bump flight" when all flights are full the next day as the airline tries to catch up on getting all the delayed passengers to their destination from the day before. If you'd like to volunteer your seat remember to arrive early to your flight and stand at the counter to be first to volunteer your seat. Also be sure to listen for your name, in the event they don't need your ticket and be prepared to board the plane at the last minute.

If you have too much luggage: A trick that sometimes works to get “extra baggage” on a flight without having to pay for overage is to arrive at the airport and use a redcap to take some of your luggage. They will attach the bag tags to your ticket jacket. Simply remove the bag tags and put them in your pocket. Proceed to the counter and check your other bags. They will rarely know you have already checked bags, as long as you have already removed the bag tags from your ticket jacket. If you must pay to check excess baggage, it is usually cheaper than sending it via airfreight. With proper planning, you can send excess via UPS, USPS or some other carrier to arrive at your destination before you, doing the same for your return.

Travel Sections of major newspapers: If you are looking to go to Europe for example, or other locations that are major “expensive” destinations, be sure to check publications like the New York times travel section, looking for specials offered by charter companies or travel wholesalers to your destination. You can often fly to places like JFK on a domestic ticket, connecting to a charter for the expensive part of your trip, saving money on your complete itinerary. Good sources are the New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, the London Times, the Boston Globe or the San Francisco Examiner.

Frequent Flier Programs: Be sure to sign up for frequent flier programs on every airline you travel on. Miles typically don’t expire and you never know when or if you will be traveling again on an airline. Frequent flier programs also offer other ways to collect miles through shopping online, dining, hotel stays, etc... and mileage adds up faster than you may think. Program members also often receive notices of special promotions or discounts that the general traveling public may not be aware of.

Frequent Flier Tickets: When attempting to book an award fare, it is best to keep your dates a bit flexible. Often times an airline may not have “award seats” on the Saturday you want to travel on, but may have empty seats on the day before or the day after. Flexibility will offer you the most choices. Also be aware that you can often call the frequent flier center and find flights that may not be available online, though you may have to pay a nominal fee, typically only \$5 or \$10 for having a real person assist you with the booking. Again the greater the lead time you provide for booking, the more likely you will get an award in the cheapest class. Also be sure to save all boarding passes to later redeem each leg for frequent flyer miles if your frequent flier number is not clearly shown on the boarding passes (although you don’t accumulate miles on award tickets). You can also often go to the ticket counter and have your frequent flier number added to your ticket if you have not already done so. I hold on to ALL boarding passes if my number is not shown on the ticket. I then check online to be sure each leg of the trip was properly credited to my account before throwing away the boarding passes. It sometimes takes a few months before mileage is posted. Keep in mind that if you book a frequent flier award at the last minute, some airlines charge you an expedite fee of up to \$50 per ticket to do so.

Mileage Credit Card Programs: Free tickets can be acquired through a variety of sources. Though most people think mileage awards are earned from traveling a certain number of miles with an airline, the reality is that most are earned through credit card spending. DO NOT attempt to earn miles from credit card spending if you cannot pay off the balance in full each month. The interest rate you end up paying on the card more than offsets any advantage gained by earning miles. If you cannot pay the full balance each month but insist on using credit cards anyway, be aware that most mileage cards also charge an annual fee, usually \$50 or \$75 per year, for the privilege of using the card. If possible, pay for big ticket items like cars, boats, etc... on your credit card. Miles stack up quickly but again only do so if you can afford to pay off the credit card balance in full at the end of the billing cycle. Some companies, Wells Fargo in particular, offer 10,000 to 20,000 miles on frequent flier programs if you refinance your home through them. Be sure to investigate the program before you refinance since you typically can't collect the miles after the fact.

Many credit card companies, banks and other service merchants offer free companion airline certificates when enrolling for a credit card. These certificates offer a free ticket with the purchase of a paid ticket, usually subject to various rules. Rules include things like fare class, date of travel, minimum or maximum stays, black out dates etc... but these companion certificates can be a great source of a free ticket, with proper planning. If you know you want to travel to a somewhat expensive destination in the future, for instance from the east coast to the west coast, check with the credit card, bank and service organizations to see if their companion certificates make sense for you. Typically these certificates require that you pay a minimum fare in order to qualify for the companion free fare, so be sure to check other rates to insure you aren't spending twice as much to use the ticket as if you booked two tickets at a discount.

Companies that regularly offer these companion certificates typically require you do something, open a credit card account and spend so much money, open a bank account and deposit a certain amount of money, etc... to qualify for the certificate. The certificates also have an expiration date and typically must be used within a year of when you receive them.

A simple search on Google with the search string "free airline companion certificate" brought up many offers. I searched on New Years Day, 2008 and found certificates offered from American Airlines, Alaska Air, Midwest, and a host of others through credit card companies, banks and even through the Hilton Honors program. Simply meet the requirements of the offer and the free flight for a companion is yours.

Also look for specials offered as an incentive for making a purchase of some kind. We once found a special that simply required buying a certain amount of cases of beer to qualify for a great discounted air travel voucher. Since beer doesn't go bad this was no-brainer and we even got to drink the beer. We have also gotten prizes such as free ski lift tickets for buying certain products. Use the net to search before you buy. Use search strings like "Airlines Promotions" or "Getaway Specials" along with the name of the location you plan on visiting.

Combination Deals: Many airlines also offer vacation packages which include airfare and lodging. Some even include a rental car. Often these packages offer substantial discounts versus booking airfare separate from lodging. Again visit each airline's website that services the location you plan to visit and look for packages or vacation specials.

Hidden Cities: Let's say you want to travel from Boston to Atlanta, a major business route and typically an expensive fare and typically with Delta, the major carrier serving Atlanta. Try to see if you can find a Delta flight that passes through Atlanta, but at a lower fare to a destination like Fort Myers. You can only have carry on baggage for this trick but simply get off the plane in Atlanta and do not make your connecting flight. Be sure to visit the courtesy desk of Delta and tell them you are not feeling well and that you intend to "recover" in a local hotel, but still expect to make your return leg from Atlanta to Boston. If you don't let them know, they will automatically cancel the rest of your trip when you fail to board your connecting flight. By telling them you intend to rejoin your itinerary on the return trip to Boston, you have now managed to get to Atlanta for less than you could have purchased a ticket booked directly from Boston to Atlanta. There are many hidden cities in the US and this technique typically works best when a carrier hubs through the city you are trying to travel to.

Purchasing tickets: It is best to purchase tickets as far in advance as you can. Most airlines typically offer their best fares early, raising the fare as the flight fills up. If you dare wait to the last moment, you can often tell how full a flight is by following the steps to purchase the tickets online, up to the point when you get to make your seat selection.

If many seats are still available, you might dare to wait. If you must arrive on a certain day, this can be a risky practice since sometimes fares only go up in price, as the date gets closer.

Sister Cities: If you are trying to reach, say Miami. Realize that most airports have a few nearby options, for example Fort Lauderdale as an option for Miami. You may find it cheaper to fly to Fort Lauderdale instead of Miami, using the savings to rent a car to reach your desired destination. Boston versus Providence, Washington Reagan versus Washington National or even Baltimore depending on where your final destination takes

you. Many of the discount airlines only fly to less popular airports but many of them are often nearby your desired destination.

Displaced Passenger tips: If you are displaced as a result of weather or over booking, first try to be re-ticketed on the airline you are flying on. Be sure to also check other airlines as well since another line may offer a flight sooner than the one you are flying on. Most airlines will share fares and allow you to continue on a different airline, but only if you request the change. Check the departure board to see what other airlines are offering flights to your final destination. Any delay due to equipment or crew issues is potentially eligible for compensation. If your delay resulted in a major inconvenience to you, write a letter to the airline's customer service address found on their website and complain. You will often get a certificate good for a free flight or other compensation for your inconvenience. Be sure to include flight specific information when you contact the airline so they can verify the delay/cancellation in their system. Be nice in the letter; honey will often catch more flies than vinegar will.

Travel Tip Long Airport layover: If you ever have a long airport layover and don't want to spend hours in the airport, take one of the courtesy shuttles to one of the better hotels in the area and spend your wait time there. I pack a bathing suit in my carry on and will shuttle to a hotel and use their facilities while I wait. Most hotels have no idea who their clients are and the pool and exercise centers are almost always accessible. I'll often eat lunch there as well since hotel restaurants often have good food at decent prices, nearly always better than the choices offered at the airport.

Bump Tickets & Compensation: To ensure a full flight most airlines oversell their flights by up to 20% since passengers often don't show for scheduled flights or they make last minute changes. If a flight is oversold, the airline will ask for volunteers willing to take a later flight, often offering compensation if necessary to get the number of volunteers they need. We actually often plan our flights with the chance of getting bumped in mind. Traveling on Fridays and Sundays increases your chance of being on an oversold flight. Travel during peak travel times, holidays or during high season also increases your chances. The greater the number of connecting flights you have to reach your destination, the more chances you have to get bumped. To work the system here are the tips we have found will increase your chances of getting bumped. First of all try to book your flights on a busy day, at prime time. Fridays and Sundays tend to be the busiest days. Book the flight that has a lot of connections versus a direct flight. Arrive to your flight early and be the first person standing at the gate counter when the gate agents arrive to get passengers boarded. Ask the agent if they might need volunteers. Most agents welcome your offer since they just want to accommodate their passengers and get the plane off on time. If they suspect volunteers are needed, give them your ticket to hold and ask

if they can even mark it as volunteer number one. Remember, offer your tickets BEFORE volunteers are called for. If you wait until they call for volunteers, your chances of being chosen depends on how many other people are willing to volunteer their seats. If you are on connecting flights, remember to stand at the counter of EACH FLIGHT and volunteer your ticket before they have called for volunteers.

If volunteers are needed, having been the first volunteer does not mean you will get lower compensation. All volunteers, the first to the last, will get the same compensation offer. They may not all get vouchers for meals or hotels however, unless they have asked for them.

Compensation for displaced travelers: If you end up displaced as a result of over booking or other delays caused by the airline, there are a number of types of compensation you are entitled to. If you are displaced and the next flight is not available until the following day, you are entitled to a hotel voucher. If your displacement is around mealtime or putting you in a hotel overnight, you are also likely entitled to meal vouchers. Generally you will receive \$20 per person vouchers for dinner and \$10 per person for breakfast and lunch. You can also request a phone card to call others affected by your delay. Some airlines will even give you an overnight kit including toothbrush, toothpaste, razor, etc.... As soon as you realize that you are being displaced, look for the person who will be rebooking passengers, handing out hotel vouchers, meal vouchers etc. The first people in the line often get the better hotels available, until those rooms run out at that hotel. Though you will still get a hotel room, you may find yourself in the Holiday Inn instead of the Marriott. You will also end up at the restaurant where the voucher works before the others who were also displaced.

Often times the chosen restaurants will end up very over crowded as the mass of delayed and displaced passengers show up with their vouchers. Keep in mind that flights delayed or cancelled due to weather are not a fault of the airlines and they don't have to compensate you for the delay. They do still have to honor your ticket when flights resume and

Tip: If you find yourself on a flight that gets cancelled and with a large group of displaced passengers that have received compensation, hotels and meal certificates, don't head right to the hotel with the herd of them. If you do, you're likely to find the hotel restaurant backed up trying to feed everyone and the front desk overwhelmed with check ins. Instead look for a restaurant at the airport that honors the meal certificate and head for the hotel after you have eaten. There will be a room for you when you get there and you won't wait all night to get fed. If you do end up at the hotel and realize the place is mobbed with displaced passenger with meal vouchers, head right to the restaurant and return to the desk to check into the hotel after you have ordered. The front desk will have had enough time to check in the masses and you will avoid both the line at the front desk and at the restaurant.

they will sometimes give vouchers for meals or hotels, depending on the circumstances. It always pays to ask.

Airlines prefer volunteers who only have carry-on luggage, since new security regulations require that passengers travel with their luggage. So to increase your chances of getting bumped, travel with carry-on luggage only. If you have already checked your bags, they will attempt to find them and take them off the plane. In reality, if they need your seat and your bag is already checked, they will let you off the plane even though your luggage is still on it. If the alternate flight you end up booked on requires an overnight stay before departure, the airline will also provide you with a hotel certificate for your overnight stay. They will also give you coupons good for meals, depending on how long you must wait for the next flight. If rebooked overnight, be sure to ask for a dinner certificate as well as one for breakfast. Travel certificates and cash vouchers are only good for one year but each time you use a cash voucher, if there is a balance remaining, the new voucher will be good for a year from the date of issue.

Case Study: I flew regular trips to Mexico City from Boston on Continental Airlines. I traveled through Houston Intercontinental airport where I would connect on a flight to Mexico City. I realized that many Mexican businessmen worked in Houston during the week and flew home Friday evening. The Friday evening flight was regularly oversold. I saw the opportunity and always booked my flights out of Boston on Friday afternoon to connect to the last flight out of Houston to Mexico City. Sometimes I would miss the connection as a result of delays leaving Boston, a city notorious for flight delays as the day goes on. Often even if I arrived in Houston on time, my connecting flight was almost always oversold. I would volunteer as soon as I arrived and give up my seat for compensation, usually a free domestic round trip ticket on Continental. I was bumped from this flight nearly 50% of the time. Continental Airlines would re-ticket me on the first flight out in the morning. They'd also give me a hotel voucher to the Marriott or similar hotel, a dinner voucher for \$15 or \$20 dollars and a \$10 breakfast voucher as well. In reality I did not need nor plan to be in Mexico City until Saturday so the extra night in Houston was part of my plan. The free ticket, hotel room and meals were a wonderful bonus.



Case Study: I was headed to San Juan, Puerto Rico from Boston, MA with my wife. We were flying American Airlines, which offers direct service from Boston to San Juan. Instead of ticketing direct to San Juan, we chose to ticket Boston to Miami, Miami to San Juan, since we were traveling on a Saturday morning, when most cruises depart from Port of Miami. I figured most passengers would not give up their seats and I realized the flight was oversold. You can often tell if a flight is oversold by trying to ticket on the flight and looking at the available seat assignments. If no seats are available, the flight is likely oversold. When American called for volunteers, we had already surrendered our seats as potential volunteers. In the end, we were put on a flight direct from Boston to San Juan, having received two \$1000 cash vouchers for travel on American's system. We actually arrived in San Juan earlier than our scheduled flight would have gotten us there!



Case Study: While returning from Belize to Boston, our family was first to volunteer before any volunteers had been called for. We were volunteer's number one, two and three. We waited until the final boarding call and were called to board at the last minute. Once seated on the plane, I overheard cabin crew mentioning that they had one more passenger than seats available. I pointed out that I was volunteer number one and they took my seat for the extra passenger and sent me back to the jet way to de-plane. I received a \$500 cash voucher and a voucher for a hotel room and dinner as well. I was ticketed on the first flight on the following morning and arrived in Boston fully rested. My wife was a bit perturbed however since I left her and our daughter on the plane to travel to Boston without me.



Case Study: We volunteered out of Miami headed to Boston, at the end of school vacation week. This is a great time to be bumped as everyone is headed home after the week off. We volunteered before everyone else and were volunteer's number 1 & 2. Sure enough the flight was oversold and we were rescheduled onto the next flight, about an hour later. We received a domestic round trip voucher good for a year. We headed right to the gate for our rescheduled flight and proceeded to volunteer our seats again. Using this technique on a busy day can get you three or four bumps on the same day.



Be advised however that if you show up late for a flight during a busy travel time, your seat will likely be gone and you will now be at the mercy of stand-by to get home. Airlines make what is referred to as the final boarding call. If you have not yet checked in or are not yet on the plane by the final boarding call, they can give your seat away to other passengers without having to compensate you for doing so, even if you are sitting right there. If the flights are really busy and you end up on stand by, you can end up waiting days at your own expense to get home.

Flying stand-by: If you were trying to book a flight in the morning but the flight was sold out or perhaps you chose a flight later in the day because the fare was considerably less expensive, try this trick. Arrive at the airport with plenty of time before the flight you wanted to get on, not the one your are ticketed on. If the airline has room on the earlier flight, they will usually put you on it at no additional charge. If they can't find you a seat, you still have a ticket on the later flight. From the airline's point of view, the sooner they can get you out of their system, the better for them. When seats fly empty, they receive no revenue from that seat. By putting you in an empty seat on an earlier flight, they still have a chance of selling your now empty seat on the later flight. Most airlines will not allow you to change the day to an earlier day however without paying a change fee. Also keep in mind that some airline employees are more willing to work with you than others might be. Always be pleasant to the person on the other side of the counter since they often can make or break a special request you may need. This is especially true when they are dealing with a whole plane load of unhappy customers. Being nice and understanding in these types of situations can lead to extra perks and better service.

Code sharing: Most major US airlines practice what is termed code sharing. The practice allows them to swap passengers with other airlines when it makes sense. The major airlines have developed a system of revenue sharing that benefits both the airline and the traveling public. Under code sharing, if your Delta flight from New York to LA gets cancelled, you may be able to fly another carrier rather than waiting all day for the next scheduled Delta flight. Tip: If you find yourself stranded as a result of equipment failure, crew shortages, etc..., check the departure board to see what other carriers have scheduled departures to the city you are trying to reach. If you find one that works for you, ask at the customer service or ticket counter of the airline that sold you your ticket, if they can move you to the other airline's flight. They can often do so, if sufficient seats are available, at no cost to you. If you don't ask however, they usually won't volunteer it as an option. Even if your ticketed airline will not make the change, it pays to ask at the competitors desk who has a flight available. They will sometimes honor the ticket and put you on their flight since they may be able to collect the revenue from that ticket leg through their code share agreement with the other airline.

Upgrades: I have found that if you ask for an upgrade to first class, you will occasionally get it if they need the seats. You can also use points or buy upgrade certificates for less than the cost of purchasing a first class ticket. Check with each airline to see how their upgrade program works.

First Class Travel: If you want to travel first class but don't want to pay the fee to do so, you might want to check out this website. www.firstclassflyer.com to find money saving tips and secrets of how to book first class at a fraction of the regular cost. You have to subscribe to get the scoop but last time I checked, they were offering a free trial month just for signing up. You do have to sign up and give a credit card number but you have 14 days to cancel your subscription and get 11 additional reports on travel for free.

Round the World or circle fares: Some airlines and consolidators offer round the world (RTW) tickets that allow the use of one or a number of code share partner airlines. They mandate a limit on travel, typically a year or a certain number of miles, and each leg must take you further west (or east) depending on which way you are going. These can be great deals if you have the time to take full advantage. Check the travel sections of major metropolitan newspapers or try the internet to find more information. The best is offered by the Star Alliance and includes 21 airlines serving 162 countries and 975 destinations. A number of others are offered by organizations like the OneWorld Alliance, the Sky Team Alliance and a number of individual airline RTW tickets. There are also a host of "not quite around the world" options that you can take advantage of, depending on where you want or need to travel. Check http://wikitravel.org/en/Round_the_world_flights for a comprehensive list.

How to Pick Seats: Airlines like to fill the plane from the back to the front. Most people prefer to be seated in the front of the plane, especially if you are trying to make tight connections. When you are given the option to pick seats online, you will notice that only a section of the airplane is visible from which to select. If you pick the seat located closest to the front of the plane and then hit continue, a new screen appears. Choose select seats again and you will find that now the section of the airplane visible in the seat selection screen includes seats closer to the front of the plane. By continuing to choose seats further forward, moving to the next screen and then selecting choose seats again, you'll get seats further forward as a choice in each new attempt. This is also a good way to see how full a flight is, slowing looking forward and backwards via seat selection. This feature often takes place before you commit to purchasing the tickets so you can learn quite a bit about how full a flight is using the seat selection tool. To aid in selecting the best seat on an airplane check out www.seatguru.com.

International travel: Most international airfares are set by IATA, which acts as a cartel for setting prices on fares. All US carriers belong to IATA since it masks their ability

to collude in pricing with other airlines. International travel is sold by different means within differing countries but almost all fares are still established with the help of IATA. Many people believe that the travel business is the same, worldwide. This is untrue. Since most fares are still regulated in the international market, it is often best to just call a travel agent on long hauls, multiple city stops or complicated itinerary, since sites like Travelocity are just not suited for finding discounts on these types of routes. I also recommend you use advanced internet searches and spend a bit of time researching the travel business in the countries you will be visiting to get a grasp on how business is done in those markets. After checking out the options, conduct your own search to price your itinerary to be sure any ticket offered to you by a travel agent is a good deal. If you were traveling to Bombay, India and then within India for example, a Google advanced search for air travel, Bombay, India, domestic tickets, or pointing your browser to find a foreign Yahoo homepage such as in.yahoo.com, which will lead you to the Yahoo India page for example. You will see who offers flights to Bombay as well as the domestic airlines offering service within India. Armed with this information, you will be better able to make a judgment about whether what a travel agent tells you is a good deal or not.

Most foreign airlines are owned or subsidized by the government and the IATA pricing system insures they will get a high price for their seats. IATA regulates the fares charged on most international flights but not the commission paid on these flights. This creates a loophole where the airlines can sell seats through a travel agency or wholesaler at the regulated rate, while the agency passes much of their commission on the ticket back to the traveler, in the form of price discounts off the regulated rate. The airlines allow this to happen since otherwise they would not be able to sell enough seats at the stated fare.

Most business travelers, the segment of the market that ends up paying the most for airline tickets as a result of last minute booking and preference for convenient schedules and direct flights, are willing to pay a higher rate. Travelers with plenty of time to plan can often find rates much lower than the regulated rates by working with a travel agency or wholesaler who kicks back commissions to make the difference. Since all international fares are regulated and published in guides like the Official Airline Guide as well as loaded into computerized reservation systems like Sabre, Apollo, Amadeus, Worldspan, Pegasys, Galileo, etc..., you will not find any discounted rates in any of these systems or by going directly to the airline's websites. You will need to find a discounter who works at a lower commission to find a cheaper rate. If either the airlines or the computerized reservation systems were to offer discounts, this would be in direct violation with their agreement with IATA. That's why consolidators, wholesalers, bucket shops and other discounters can exist.

Consolidators: Consolidators are brokers who buy seats at a discount. Though we are led to believe they buy blocks of tickets and then sell them, they are often buying the tickets

as they are actually booking them to their clients, but under IATA pricing, they are able to purchase them at a much lower price than the public can, making a profit by selling these tickets for less than full fare but more than their cost. Consolidators sometimes have difficulties actually getting the tickets after they have been sold, especially during peak travel seasons or on full flights. Most flights aren't available through consolidators until a few weeks before departure and they are not exchangeable or refundable. Typically you will not even get frequent flier miles on tickets purchased through a consolidator. Check www.airlineconsolidator.com and www.airsaver.com.

Charter Companies: Charters companies either own or lease an airline and then book it for a particular route. They often work with tour operators to help fill a majority of seats. Charters are your best bet for last minute discounts since empty seats provide no revenue. Be wary of charters, they sometimes will cancel flights at the last minute if the flight did not sell sufficiently to cover costs. Your tickets are not likely to be accepted by other airlines if a charter leaves you stranded. Trip insurance might be a wise idea if using charter services. The better charter lines hold your money in escrow until your flight departs, making refunds easier to obtain if the flight ends up cancelled.

Bucket Shops: These organizations buy bulk seats at a discount and sell them. Many bucket shops offer great last minute specials rather than having their seats fly empty. You can also often find ethnic bucket shops such as a Chinese travel agency in New York's Chinatown that sells discount seats to China. Bucket shops exist nearly worldwide so look for them if you find yourself somewhere like Amsterdam trying to get back to the states. Most travel guides list bucket shops and consolidators located in local foreign markets, if there are any.

Well known bucket shops include www.cheaptickets.com and www.lowestfare.com but for a complete list see <http://www.hasbrouck.org/faq/> When you have your best price, check www.bookingwiz.com to see if you can better it .

Couriers: Courier companies often sell discount tickets in exchange for you carrying baggage or documents for them. Your return trip is usually quickly after your arrival, within a few days to a few weeks. You also need to pack very lightly since the courier company often uses most of your baggage allotment. You usually don't have to touch their luggage, you just show up for the flight, receive the ticket and travel. Fares through this option can be very cheap, with transnational fares in the \$250 to \$500 range depending on destination. You will also sometimes find one-way courier fares being offered. Courier travel is a dying breed, as cheap airfare becomes more available however, if you find yourself traveling the same route again and again, you might check with the courier companies to see if you can become an "insider" with them along with preferential treatment as a result.

Discount Carriers: Keep in mind that most discount carriers don't advertise fares on third party systems like Travelocity, Expedia and Orbitz. Use Google to see what airlines serve the destination you are flying to. For example search "airlines serving Salt Lake City Utah" to see who flies there. Then check directly with the discount carriers serving that market. This particular search shows discounters Jet Blue, Frontier, America West, and Mesa Airlines all offer service to this market, along with FunJet Vacations and Sierra Pacific offering frequent charters from Salt Lake City. Check directly on the websites of firms like Southwest, Jet Blue, Air Tran etc and compare prices before booking on one of the major carriers.

Travel Agents and Trade Publications: Always specify that you want "the lowest possible fare" since there may be specials that are not considered economy or fall under "Apex" fare rules. In the early 1990's the airline industry was deregulated and airlines stopped paying a percentage commission to travel agents. Agents now add a booking fee, averaging \$27, to each ticket they book. Keep in mind however that although the agent is no longer getting a commission from the airline, most hotels, car rental companies and cruise lines do pay commissions, sometimes very large commissions. Generally, booking your own travel will cost you less. Keep in mind however that travel agencies sometimes get volume discounts and other incentives that can result in cheaper tickets than you can find online, especially on international flights. Paying a booking fee in this case might be worthwhile. Use all methods when shopping for airfare, especially long hauls or other costly routes.

Travel Documents: These days you need a passport to travel outside of the US. Passports take a while to get though they can be expedited for a fee. Plan ahead and apply for your passport early and avoid paying the expedite fee. You can apply for a passport through your local post office, you will need two color 2"x2" passport photos in order to complete the application. Once you receive your passport, be sure to always keep it in a safe location and remember where you put it. Some countries require that your passport is not due to expire for a certain number of days after you enter the country. Costa Rica, for example, requires that your passport is not due to expire for at least 90 days after you enter the country.

Some countries also require that you have a visa to enter that country. Check before you go to find out what you need to enter any country you plan on visiting. Contact the local embassy of any country you plan on visiting to apply for visas before you go. Carry a color photocopy of your passport as well as any visas you need when traveling. If you should lose your passport, contact the US consulate in the country you are traveling to. Bring the color copy when you go to the consulate. Also be sure to keep any tourist card or other documentation with you if any were issued to you when you entered the coun-

try you are visiting. Many countries require that you turn in these documents when you leave. Keep in mind as well that many countries require you pay an airport departure tax when you leave. Often these can only be paid in cash. Check on departure tax requirements online before you travel or when you arrive into a country so you can budget accordingly. Some countries require that you show a return or onward ticket prior to entering the country. This shows your intent to eventually leave. You may also have to show that you have adequate funds for your travel within the country you are visiting. Typically a credit card in your possession satisfies the funds requirement in most countries. Keep your passport in a secure place at all times since they have a value to criminals and on the black market.

Case Study: I'd traveled to Belize on vacation with my wife and my daughter. Belize uses the dollar as their local currency but they have dollars with pictures of animals on them. My daughter had collected various bills to take home with her as souvenirs. On the way to the airport, we passed the One Barrel Rum factory. Being a fan of rum, I decided to stop and buy some rum to take home with us. I used nearly all my cash on the purchase only to discover that we needed to pay a \$15 departure tax per person in order to leave Belize and they only took cash. I didn't have enough time to find an ATM but fortunately my daughter had her Belize bill collection, which we ended up using to pay the tax.



Airport Parking : How many of you have parked your car at the airport while traveling only to return and pay nearly as much to park your car as it cost to take the trip? Proper planning will eliminate steep parking charges. Here are the secrets. If you have to stay a night at a hotel near the airport at either end of your trip, see if the hotel offers extended parking services to guests who are flying. Some hotels offer free parking for up to a few weeks for simply staying there for one night. The parking savings alone will more than offset the cost of the hotel. Also check online for offsite parking lots that offer free shuttle service and discount parking. We use www.unitedairportparking.com.

Case study: How to avoid paying for long-term parking. We live near the airport in Key West but always either had to taxi to the airport each way and pay a fixed rate per person or park our car in long-term parking, at considerable expense. We learned a trick however. We now load the bags into the car and head to the airport early. I drop my wife off at the airport with the bags and drive home. I hop on my scooter or bike and head back to the airport, locking the bike to a bike rack provided by the airport. Upon

our return, I head right for the bike and head home for the car while my wife collects our bags at baggage claim. She then heads out to the street to wait for me to arrive in the car. We use the same method while in the Boston area but I take public transportation back and forth instead of using the bike or scooter. Parking long term for 10 days can cost over \$100 in some airports. We have also left our car in a local neighborhood near the airport where parking is free, after dropping her off with the bags.



Case Study: Discount Parking at Miami International Airport is available online. We book our parking in advance and have a printed receipt that gets us into the Wyndham Hotel's parking lot. We then use the airport shuttle from the Wyndham to the airport and return to the hotel at the end of our trip via the shuttle again. Instead of paying \$12 per day at long term parking through the airport, we pay \$6 per day by pre-paying through United Parking through their parking arrangement at the Wyndham. Anyone familiar with Miami International will realize that the Wyndham is the closest hotel to the airport and this is a very convenient way to park long term in Miami. We don't have to hassle with a cab or drag our bags for miles to long term parking.



Baggage Limits:

Checked baggage is generally limited to two pieces. Size is typically limited to total length plus width divided by height, with the total not to exceed 62 inches. Weight limits for each piece of luggage is anywhere from 50 pounds to 70 pounds, depending on your destination, the airline and the class of service. Full flights will result in tighter baggage restriction enforcement. Many foreign airlines have a weight limit only, typically 20 kg (1 kilogram = 2.2 pounds) for coach, 30 kg for business class and 40 kg for first class and not limited by the number of pieces.

Most airlines also let you carry on two items, a carry on suitcase and one other personal item such as a laptop case, a purse or knapsack etc. These must either fit under the seat in front of you or in the overhead storage above your seat. Limits depend on the airline you are traveling on as well as the type of aircraft. Turbo prop service often prohibits any "suitcase" carry on and will take your carry on from you at the tarmac and check it in the hold. This is due to the fact that many of these smaller aircraft do not have overhead baggage compartments. Carry on is usually limited to 21" x 14" x 8' but I have seen carry on as thick as a 12" get stuffed into an overhead compartment. Remember to carry any medications you may need in your carry-on and be sure they are in the original bottles. US and foreign Customs won't bother you if your meds are in the original bottles with the original prescription. I also recommend you carry a clean set of clothes and any toiletries you can't live without in your carry on, in case your checked baggage is delayed. A bathing suit is also handy if you are going someplace where you might want to use it.

Be aware if you are traveling on multiple flights or multiple airlines that your baggage must comply with the most restrictive leg or carrier, which may not be your departing flight. Do realize though that if an airline took your baggage on the outbound leg, they should be willing to bring you home as well. If you were allowed two bags per person heading out, I would argue with a gate agent that I am entitled to have two on the way back home.

Case study: We were on an award ticket through Continental Airlines from Key West, FL to Los Angeles, CA. Continental had used "code share" ticketing to book part of our flight on Delta, from LAX to Tampa, FL. We were then booked on a Continental Connection flight from Tampa to Key West. When we checked in for our return trip to Key West, Delta would only allow us to check one bag each, though we had two bags each in our possession that we had arrived with. The computer would not allow Delta to check two bags per person through to Key West based on restrictions on the Continental Connection flight we were connecting to in Tampa. Delta suggested

we pay for the extra bags in LA. I chose to take the trip in two distinct segments, LA to Tampa on Delta, who allowed us two bags each. We then had to claim our bags in Tampa and recheck with Continental. I knew that Continental would allow us two bags each in Tampa and I avoided paying for extra bags by dividing up the flight in this way. We could only do so since we had plenty of time to claim and recheck our bags in Tampa. Otherwise I guess I would have had to pay the overage.



New liquid restrictions: Liquids brought in your carry on are now limited to no more than 3 ounces in size and stored inside a zip lock plastic bag in your carry on. You may have multiple items, all of less than 3 ounces, stored in the same zip lock bag. Lithium batteries are also now prohibited in checked baggage.

Case study: Our neighbors, Barry and Trish, flew home from a visit with family over the Christmas holidays. Trish had received a valuable snow globe as a gift and packed it in her carry-on luggage. When she tried to board the aircraft, TSA (Transportation Security Administration) took away the snow globe since it contained more than 3 ounces of liquid. Had she realized, she could have put it in her checked bag since there is no restriction on liquids over 3 ounces in checked baggage.



Lost Baggage: Lost baggage is usually not lost; it is just delayed in transit. Only a tiny fraction of 1% of all bags end up never being found. Most airlines will deliver your baggage to your home or hotel if it does not arrive with you on your flight though they may not do so right away. In the event that your bags are actually lost, the limits for compensation are currently \$3000 in the US or \$1000 “Special Drawing Rights” on an international flight. Special drawing rights are a way airlines have standardized your compensation regardless of the currency you are ultimately paid in. For example a special drawing right as of Feb 2007 was equal to \$1.530 US Dollars, so you could expect compensation to limit out at \$1530 dollars in total compensation per person. Convention for the Unification of Certain Rules for International Carriage by Air

<http://www.jus.uio.no/lm/air.carriage.unification.convention.montreal.1999/doc>

The link above will lead you to an explanation of your rights as set by the 1999 Montreal Convention where compensation was standardized internationally.

This new ruling became effective on November 4th, 2003 but has been modified a few times since then. This new agreement replaced an earlier one that had been drafted during the Warsaw Convention of 1929. Limits on lost bags while traveling internationally used to be determined by weight.

If you end up receiving less than your actual loss, check with your credit card company if you bought the ticket using a credit card since you may be covered for uncompensated losses by your credit card company. Also be aware that you may be covered for losses that exceed what the airline paid through your home owners policy. Be sure to file a lost bag claim before leaving the airport and provide a good description of your bag. Be aware that the airline will require an itemized list and keep in mind that if your bag is found, they may well check the list you submit to the actual contents of the bag. The airline depreciates items you submit in a claim so don't expect to get full price for a 3 year old suit. Don't forget to claim the value of the suitcase as well.

Missing bags are different than lost bags. Missing bags may entitle you to compensation to purchase items you need immediately but any such compensation will be deducted from final settlement if your bag ends up declared irretrievably lost. Compensation will vary depending on if you were on a domestic flight, an international flight or a domestic flight somewhere else in the world. You may be able to get more money in travel vouchers than you might get in cash, so keep that in mind when negotiating with the airline that lost your bag. You also have the option of seeking additional compensation from an airline through small claims court.

The airlines have a long list of excluded items that they won't reimburse you for. Most are high value items.

Antiques	Money
Computer Equipment and Related Items	Paintings & one of a kind art
Documents (personal or business, negotiable papers)	Perishable Items
Electronic Equipment	Pets/Animals
Film	Photographs
Fragile Items	Photographic Equipment
Irreplaceable Items	Samples
Jewelry	Securities
Keys	Silverware
Manuscripts	Watches

How to reduce the chance of losing your baggage:

Remove any old routing or baggage scanning stickers off of your bags before checking them. Some scanning is done electronically and the equipment may read an old sticker and route the bag accordingly. Also be sure that your bags have bag tags with your current address and also be sure to put your name and contact information inside each bag. We try to put a copy of our itinerary inside each bag that will be easily found when the bag is opened. At a minimum, be sure your home address is inside the bag. Your bags may not end up at your immediate destination but they may ultimately find their way home. Remember that you should never put items in your bag that you need to have when you arrive at your destination. Examples include medicines, laptops, wedding dresses, legal documents or anything else you know you will need or that have a lot to do with the purpose of your trip. Also keep copies of your trip information in your carry on. Things like your rental car agreement, hotel confirmations, airline tickets and vouchers, your passport, credit cards, cell phone, charger, jewelry etc... do not belong in your checked luggage. There have been many articles about airline baggage handlers and TSA agents helping themselves to articles in baggage. Don't make it tempting to anyone along the way.

When you check your bags, be certain the destination on the claim tickets is where you want the bags to end up. Check that your bags aren't scheduled to be delivered to a stop over city on your itinerary making sure they end up where you end up. Be sure you get your copies of your bag tags and keep them in or stapled to your ticket jacket. Also don't check in at the last minute and expect your bags to make a close connection. Though you realize you need to hustle to get to your gate, the baggage handlers may not realize your bags are in a hurry too.

Our bags are bright red and very distinctive. Consider this when purchasing luggage and try to avoid purchasing the standard black suitcase that looks like nearly every other suitcase in a line up. There are a number of distinctive tags that you can get through online travel stores or from the Skymall magazine found in many airlines.

Baggage insurance sold through the airlines is not a good value. The coverage you are buying is typically what you are automatically covered for and often has the same limits to liability that you have on your standard ticket agreement.

Where do lost bags end up? There is an incredible store covering more than an entire city block located in Scottsboro, Alabama known as the unclaimed baggage center. It is worth the trip if you are in the area and nearly all of the items have come from lost baggage. Imagine that the airline has paid you for your lost bag and then it suddenly turns up. They don't typically contact you but instead they sell it at a very low price to the Unclaimed Baggage Center in Scottsboro, AL.

Here's what some media services have to say about the Unclaimed Baggage Center:

“It's like a treasure hunt. You never know what you'll find.”

TODAY

“The public can't get enough of it. What began as a few pieces of luggage sold from card tables 24 years ago is now a sprawling glass and granite complex that takes up more than a city block.”

The Wall Street Journal

“A posse of style vixens, of fashion beasts on a weekender, a road trip a' la Thelma & Louise, could have a high old time at Unclaimed Baggage Center.”

VOUGE

“One of the biggest tourist attractions in the state.”

Good Morning America

“Unclaimed Baggage Center selected as one of the great places to visit along a route by Rand McNally Best of the Road”.

Rand McNally

“Unclaimed Baggage Center gets nearly one million visitors annually, making it one of Alabama's top attractions.”

The London Free Press

“Since it opened in 1970 Unclaimed Baggage Center has been a mecca for bargain hunters willing to venture off the beaten path.”

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

“Amazing things, indeed. Even a few miraculous ones.”

The Seattle Times

“A sapphire and diamond bracelet. Hermes scarves, Gianni Versace dresses, Burberry raincoats for men. A yellow silk Christian Dior jacket. They're all here, along with expensive sporting equipment, fancy luggage and high-priced cameras. So where exactly are we? the Unclaimed Baggage Center in the sweet, country town of Scottsboro, Ala.”

The Baltimore Sun

“The Unclaimed Baggage center of the universe.”

World News Tonight

Case Study: My mother and daughter flew Boston to Key West to visit one Christmas vacation. They made a close connection in Newark, as a result of delays coming out of Boston in a snowstorm. The bags were not on the flight when they arrived in Key West. I headed right to the Continental counter and set the bags up for delivery. By evening we had not yet received the bags. Since the airport is close to our house, I drove to the airport to check on the bags. Sure enough they were sitting there and had been for most of the day. It is worth checking or calling since most employees have little concern for when a bag ends up delivered to its destination. A simple phone call may often get it into a cab and onto its way to being delivered.



Damaged Bags: When bags get damaged while in the possession of the airline, you have a right to report the damage. Go to the baggage claim counter and file a damage report. Most of the time, the airline will send a “will call” label from UPS or some other carrier and take the bag to their repair facility for inspection. If the bag is repairable, they will do so. If not, they will often send you a brand new comparable bag. If your bag is very worn and at the end of its life, don’t expect much sympathy if it arrives damaged. Many airlines will offer you a depreciated value for your bag, sometimes right on the spot.

Damaged Goods in your bag: If you discover that goods have been damaged in your bag, let the airline know right away. Generally goods that were packed poorly or delicate goods such as a laptop computer will not be paid for.

Case Study: We arrived to our tropical vacation and claimed our bags only to discover that the bags had obviously sat out in the rain somewhere along the way. Our soft sided bags were completely soaked as was all the contents. I pointed out the issue to the airline prior to leaving the airport and was issued a damage claim number. I was told to have the complete contents of my bag sent out for cleaning and to report any remaining damage after cleaning as well as submit the receipt for cleaning for reimbursement. The hotel we were staying at was able to get all but one item adequately cleaned. We submitted the bill and the airline sent us a check for both the cleaning and the damaged article of clothing.



Case study: We had sent a bag to be fixed that was damaged on a flight on American Airlines. About a month later we received a brand new American Tourister hard-sided suitcase for the one that was damaged. It apparently could not be repaired. We have also had an exploded bag come up the belt in a plastic bin with both my wife's and my clothing spewing out of the bin, along with various articles scattered on the belt. If your bag is in really bad shape, consider buying a new one.



Duty Free Items:

One nice thing about traveling outside the country is the option of purchasing perfume, electronics, jewelry, cameras and liquor in the duty free store on your return flight to the US. Some countries don't offer much of a bargain on duty free while others offer incredible bargains. When you travel outside the country, you will usually arrive into one of the gateway airports upon arriving back in the US, where you will deplane, gather your luggage and clear Customs. You may then have to change to a domestic flight to continue your journey home. Keep in mind that if you buy liquor, perfume or other liquids duty free, it is given to you after your luggage has already been checked. Under the new TSA restrictions, if you arrive in the US and need to take a connecting flight after clearing US Customs, you will have to place any liquid duty free purchases into your checked luggage in order to bring it on your connecting flight with you. Liquid restrictions will prohibit you from carrying the duty free parcel as a carry on. We often check an empty suitcase as luggage on our departure from the foreign country and then put our duty free purchases into it after clearing customs. You usually have time to put your duty free liquor purchases into your suitcases after claiming them to clear customs. You can then recheck your bags for your domestic connecting flight home and your liquids will no longer be a carry on.

Drinks on the plane: Cocktails cost \$5.00 on most flights. Nips found in liquor stores only cost a dollar or so. Refilling nip bottles from a larger bottle costs next to nothing. The airlines do not allow you to pour your own liquor on flights but do so if you dare. Order a coke and pour your favorite nip supplied rum into it, being careful not to have fellow passengers see you do so. Keep in mind that liquids in your carry on must be under 3 ounces and stored in a ziplock bag.

Dining:

Eating out: Eating in restaurants while traveling is one of the largest expenses incurred during your trip. Savvy travelers find ways around spending lots of money on meals. When we arrive to a destination, we seek out the local grocery stores, farmers markets and fruit stands. Eating cereal in your room at breakfast will add up to substantial savings on an extended trip. We carry a collapsible cooler while traveling and use the ice machine in our hotel or the fridge in our room to keep it filled with ice. Even if you are not staying in a hotel, you can often just walk in and fill a cooler with ice from the ice machines found on every floor. We also carry snacks with us when traveling. We try to bring food from home for our flights, avoiding the high priced food found at most airports. We make sandwiches that don't spoil, like peanut butter and jelly. We do the same before heading to the airport to fly home.

Tip: We always bring a bit of extra food to share on our flights. We were once on a delayed flight and the flight attendants didn't have enough of the ubiquitous pretzel snack mix for everyone on board. Unfortunately the couple next to us had failed to pack food and they had small hungry children. They were very thankful for the granola bars we shared.

Restaurant discount plans and mileage incentive plans: There are a number of ways to save money or accrue mileage when eating in restaurants. www.rewardsnetwork.com is a great way to save about 20% off the cost of your meal. Apply online and get the card, good in many US eating establishments. You simply present the card with your check and receive a cash back discount on your credit card statement. Check their website to find restaurants in the area you are visiting that belong to the program. Another such card is Primecard www.IGTcard.com with a similar program. Both programs require membership and both charge an annual fee but the fee gets paid out of rewards you have earned. You can also receive discounts at a number of major hotel chains through the same program. You can receive either cash back on your credit card or you can opt for frequent flier miles instead. Many frequent flier programs offer their own dining bonus. Most require that you register your card to use the program. American Airlines AA Advantage Dining is a good program with no annual fee. You'll receive from 5 to 10 frequent flier miles for each dollar spent on the Citibank Advantage credit card when eating at member establishments. You must register your card for the program prior to dining at a member establishment. Check with your frequent flier program to register. Also check on Ebay and Craigslist prior to visiting your destination. You can often find people selling gift certificates or tickets to dinner theatres, dinner cruises, etc... for less than face value. Many charities solicit donations from local eating establishments and sell them for less than face value on the auction sites.

Search the tickets category at www.Craigslist.com in the city you will be visiting allowing enough time for you to receive the tickets or certificates by mail before you travel.

Check local newspapers where you are traveling to find lists of events, happy hours and other specials that can result in big dining savings. Many happy hours at restaurants and hotels offer half priced appetizers that can often make a meal. Some bars have a free buffet during happy hour that you can eat your dinner at. Asking a local where to get the best deal is always a good bet.

Case Study: We took a vacation to Venezuela with my cousin's family. We stayed at the Macuto Sheraton in Caracas. Our rooms all had large sinks in the bathrooms. We lined the sink with a plastic bag and filled it with ice. Our maid was amused to find the ice filled sink full of containers of milk, orange juice and cold cuts stored in zip lock bags. It made a nice cooler for the duration of our vacation.



When you are traveling, a tip is to go to a gourmet grocery store and get some good picnic supplies and make a picnic lunch or dinner to take with you and enjoy in an appropriate location. Most attractions charge a lot for food and the quality and choices may not be as good as what you can pack on your own, for a lot less money.

Restaurant week: Many major cities host an annual event called restaurant week. This typically involves a variety of higher end restaurants that offer a special meal, generally an appetizer, a main course and a desert for a fixed price that is significantly less than if ordered separately. Check the local newspapers in the town you are visiting to find these types of events. Look for events like “Taste of Key West” or “Taste of Cambridge”.

Dining coupon books. Many cities offer a dining and attractions coupon book, often called “The Entertainment Book” that they sell for anywhere from \$25 to \$50. There are also books called “enjoy the city book”. There are a number of them out there and they are fairly easy to find. These books offer specials like “buy one entrée and get the second one free” half price dining or a free bottle of wine with the purchase of an entrée. Many of the restaurants are upscale and you can quickly pay for the coupon book by using only a few coupons. Look for them online by searching under discount coupon books and the name of the city you will be visiting.

While searching for deals for our upcoming Phoenix, Arizona vacation, we found the following “Enjoy The City” coupon book and the “Entertainment Book” with the following offers.

<http://www.entertainment-savings-offers.com/phoenix/book/detail/> The Phoenix Entertainment Book contains discount coupons for nearly 400 Phoenix area restaurants. These coupons are often two-for-one offers.

<http://www.enjoythecitybook.com/AZPhoenix.aspx>

<http://www.entertainment-savings-offers.com/> for a list of books by city

The following merchants are offering thousands of dollars in savings in the Phoenix edition:

RESTAURANTS

Arby's Baja Fresh Bajio Baskin Robbins Blimpie Bruegger's Buffalo Wild Wings Buffalo Wings & Rings Burger King Burrito Express Carvel Charley's Cinnabon Cold Stone Creamery Cousins Subs Del Taco Domino's Pizza Dunkin' Donuts El Pollo Loco Emerald City Smoothie Great American Cookies Green Chilies Hot Dog on a Stick Hungry Howie's Pizza Jack in the Box Johnny Rockets Juice It Up! McDonald's Moe's Mrs. Fields Orange Julius Papa John's Papa Murphy's Popeyes Pretzel Time Pretzelmaker Quiznos Sub Rally's Robeks Juice Samurai Sam's Shane's Smoothie King Sonic Subway Taco Del Mar TCBY Ted's Hot Dogs The Pita Pit Venezia's Pizzeria Wienerschnitzel

ENTERTAINMENT / RECREATION

Brunswick Desert Sky Lanes Brunswick Zone Cracker Jax Fiddlesticks Family Fun Park IMAX Theatre Wildlife World Zoo

SERVICES / RETAIL

Brakes Plus CobbleStone Auto Spa Delia's Cleaners Dick's Sporting Goods Edible Arrangements Enterprise Rent-A-Car F.Y.E. Jiffy Lube

GOLF

Augusta Ranch Golf Club Cracker Jax Driving Range Viewpoint

Trains: Amtrak is an option for travel though typically as expensive as flying. Train travel is very nice however and sometimes a cheaper option to reach out of the way places. See more about Amtrak below. In many countries other than the US, trains are a great travel value. Europe has a great train system. If you plan extensive travel in Europe, check into a Eurail pass before you leave the states. Eurail offers four types of passes. The Global Pass, good in over 20 countries. The Select Pass, which gives you the option of choosing up to five countries for use. The Regional Pass, good only in a select region of Europe. There are about 20 different regions offering a regional pass. The One Country pass, as the name implies, this pass is good anywhere in one country only. These passes are good for a given period of time, specified when you buy your pass and good for up to three months max. See www.Eurail.com for more information.

Buses: Local buses can be a great value and are generally easy to use. If you don't speak the language and are unsure which bus you need to take, ask, ask and continue to ask people until you have gotten an answer that seems correct. When you board the bus, see if you can get the driver to let you know when you have reached your destination. A taxi from San Jose, Costa Rica to Manuel Antonio, Costa Rica will cost you about \$80 while a bus will take you to the same place for \$5.00. In some countries, Mexico for example, there are different classes of buses. If this is the case, make sure you are purchasing a ticket on a "first class bus" and not a "chicken bus". In Mexico, the buses now serve meals on first class buses and many of them show movies, much like the airlines do.

Greyhound: Greyhound is a great value for the budget minded traveler. It is possible to travel coast to coast in the US for about \$99.00 each way. Your ticket may allow you to stop along the way at no additional charge. There are a number of discount programs offered by Greyhound for veterans, seniors and students. Be sure to ask BEFORE purchasing your ticket. Be careful of your belongings on all buses. I prefer to take my baggage into the bus with me, storing it under the seat in front of me while sleeping.
www.greyhound.com.

Greyhound Discovery Pass & Amtrak's USA Rail and North American Rail pass program. These passes allow nearly unlimited travel for a given number of days, usually 15 or 30. The North American Rail pass is good in the US and Canada. Amtrak offers a year pass good in Florida for \$249 and a California pass good for 7 days of travel over a 21 day period. These programs can save you a lot of money if they match your travel needs. Amtrak also offers weekly specials, Getaways and other discounts. AAA membership will get you a 10% discount system wide. Amtrak offers a 15% discount to students, seniors and veterans. They also offer a 50% discount to kids under 12 traveling with an adult. Amtrak has a hot deals page that can be accessed from their website at www.amtrak.com.

Discount bus lines: There has been a recent increase in the number of discount bus companies serving popular routes. In Boston, the Fung Wa bus company is a prime example. Fung Wa offers bus service between Boston and New York City with hourly departures. Fares are only \$15 each way and the buses are very comfortable. If you plan on traveling a popular route that is not too far, search under discount bus service and the names of both your departure city and arrival city.

Rental Cars: How to find cheap Rental Cars. Google “car rental discount codes and coupons” and “the name of the city you are traveling to”. You can often find discount codes and coupons for a variety of rental deals. Check www.rentalcarmomma.com and www.rentalcodes.com for current promotions on rental cars.

Rental Car Insurance Tips: Car rental insurance is often unnecessary since many credit cards and sometimes your own insurance covering the car you left in the garage actually covers you in a rental. Be cautious however since if you don't have full collision on your car at home, you won't on your rental either. Check with your insurer as well as your credit card company before you go. Use the internet to locate smaller companies serving the market you are visiting, who often offer rates lower than any of the national companies. www.rentawreck.com and www.foxrentacar.com are both examples of lesser known rental car companies.

Case Study: Speaking of small local rental car companies, we needed a 4 wheel drive sport utility vehicle in Costa Rica. All the major car rental agencies were charging more than I thought we should have to pay. I searched online and came across Vamos Rent-A-Car. www.Vamos4x4.com. The company had two partners who were buying 4x4's and renting them out. When we first discovered them, they only had 5 cars. They had no office in the airport and instead would either deliver the car to you at the airport on arrival or pick you up and take you to a parking lot a few miles from the airport where they stored their cars. Word of mouth is a wonderful thing when you offer a great product for less than the competition. Vamos now has a first class retail office close to the airport and their fleet is probably approaching 100 cars. We use them for our tours and on one trip we ended up needing an extra car at the last minute for the following day. When I called to book it George, the owner, apologized since they had no cars available. I began to call around looking for another car when my phone rang. It was George. He said he had a line on a car that would meet my needs and he was going that day to purchase it and that he would have it available for me by the next morning. Now that is customer service.



In general you will get a better rate booking online or even over the phone than you will get at the counter in an airport. With a bit of planning, you will likely pay less and get a better class of vehicle as well. If you do end up waiting until the last minute, it often pays to call the national toll free number to book your car versus booking at the car rental desk at the airport you just arrived at.

Case study: My friend Jay once arrived at an airport and went to rent a car, only to realize that all the rental car companies had no cars available. He walked away and proceeded to call the national toll free number for the rental company and was able to book a car over the phone even though the local counters all said they had no cars available. He walked back to the counter with his confirmation number and was given a car right away.



Drive away services: There are services that specialize in delivering cars throughout the country for their customers that, after a background check on you, will provide you a car and pay the gas to the destination they want the car delivered to. Many motor home retailers even offer paid positions delivering motor homes to buyers located in other parts of the country. Typically you must be at least 23 years old to drive a vehicle being delivered and also make a cash deposit before leaving with the vehicle. You and the company offering vehicle delivery services will agree on a route and timetable before you leave. See www.autodriveaway.com, and www.movecars.com for a few examples of how these services work. You can also post car delivery services on Craigslist, stating where you want to end up and see what offers you get. This works well from destinations like the northeast to south Florida in the fall and south Florida to the northeast in the spring.

Car Rentals by the Hour: There may be occasions when you don't need a rental care for a full day. Auto sharing services like Zipcar www.zipcar.com, now have hourly rentals in many major U.S. cities as well as London. Zipcar requires a \$50 membership fee and a \$25 one-time application charge for its base plan but rates include all gas and insurance.

Hotels & Lodging

Getting the best deal on a hotel:

Private homes: If you plan on staying somewhere for more than a few days, check Vacation Rental By Owner www.VRBO.com. Vacation rental by owner is one of many sites developed for owners to rent their properties. Sometimes you are renting the whole house, sometimes just a room within the house. Other great sites include www.homeaway.com and www.PerfectPlaces.com. If you live in a tourist area, you may be able to swap your home with someone else's who wants to visit your location. Check sites like www.Craigslist.com and post your swap request on the site of both your home town and the area of the destination you want to visit. Look for the category "Housing Swaps" under the housing category on Craigslist.

Other Places to find cheap accommodations

Hostels: There are various types of hostels to stay in around the world. Contrary to what many believe, you don't have to be young to stay at a youth hostel. In fact there are a good number of senior hostels out there if you look for them. Youth Hostels are not for everyone but they are a great cheap alternative. Typically they involve semi private or community sleeping arrangements with shared bathroom facilities. Hostels in Europe, especially during summer months, tend to be very crowded. They also tend to be very social places so if you don't like being around other people, skip the hostel scene. A good hostel directory is www.hostel.com.

B&B's and other alternative lodging: Also consider the many bed & breakfast options as well as missions, pensions, and private homes. These options can be found in many countries and give a traveler a more homey experience. Many B&B's are in fabulous properties and provide a more social setting than your standard hotel room. Check www.bedandbreakfast.com, www.bnbfinder.com, www.bnblast.com and www.bbonline.com.

Online hotel booking versus calling or walk-ins. Hotel pricing varies. At one hotel, management may have a policy to offer lower rates over the phone than in person. Others may offer their lowest rate online, through one of the travel portals. If you find yourself faced with needing a hotel at the last moment, try calling first and get the best rate, then walk in and try to negotiate a better rate. After they have quoted you the price, always ask if they have something less expensive. You might say you don't have enough for that room and ask if they have any others that are cheaper. You have nothing to lose except money if you don't ask for a discount. Also when traveling on the interstate, you can often find discount hotel coupon books at rest areas. Read the fine print or call ahead as sometimes these rates are only offered Sunday to Thursday or are not offered during special events.

Camping: For the hearty, camping is also an option. Depending on the season and how you are traveling, camping can be a great cheap alternative to hotels. In the US, state parks tend to have the lowest rates. National parks tend to fill up early and advanced reservations are often a necessity. Reservations for US national parks are made at www.nps.gov/findapark or by calling 800-365-2267 and following the onscreen prompts. If the park you are interested is not on the list, call that park directly. The US Forest Service also offers camping, see www.forestcamping.com Canadian national park reservations can be found at www.pccamping.ca or by calling 877-reserve. There are also many private campgrounds throughout the world. A complete guide to camping in America can be found at www.woodalls.com. Another set of camping resources can be found at www.GoodSamClub.com or www.FMCA.com.

Staying Free: There may be a time when you need to stay somewhere for free. If you are traveling, consider taking a bus, train or flight that occurs during the night and do your best to catch some sleep while heading toward your destination. If you are not headed anywhere but still need a place to sleep, the best places are usually transportation centers like airports, bus stations and train stations. I usually check the departure schedule and find one that doesn't leave until the following day so that in the event I am woken by security to throw me out, I tell them I am taking the train to such and such city that leaves tomorrow morning. Again if you are faced with this option, be sure you secure your stuff. Sleeping with an arm through your back pack strap is advised or look for security lockers to leave your belongings in. Bus and train stations also often have a luggage lock up area where you can leave your bags with an attendant for a fee.

Cheap hotels: First of all let's differentiate between cheap hotels and getting a great rate on a hotel room. We can all find cheap hotels though most of us wouldn't want to stay in them. Hotels that rent rooms long term or rooms by the hour are best avoided. The star rating system used by most travel services is well known to most of us. I'd like to teach you how to get a rate much better than the walk in rate at most hotels.

First of all hotels make no money for a room that sits empty all night. They also price rooms based on demand. During busy seasons or special events, it is hard to get great rates on hotel rooms, based on limited availability. Most markets have an excess of hotel rooms however but these firms don't want to offer discount rates to the public. They use travel discount websites to offer their unsold rooms at tremendous savings. These travel websites keep the name of the hotel hidden to help protect the pricing structure of the hotel in question.

If the Hyatt were to discount their own rooms, everyone would pay discounted prices. But if Hyatt offered a percentage of the rooms they believe will remain unsold on a given

night to a travel discount, who sells the rooms direct to the public without revealing the Hyatt name prior to purchase, the Hyatt will likely end up filling more rooms. Check sites like www.Hotwire.com where you have to accept the reservation prior to knowing the exact hotel you are staying in. With a little bit of sleuthing, you can often figure out exactly which hotel you are being offered before they tell you the name. Try opening another window while on hotwire and search on the amenities offered at the hotel they are describing. www.Priceline.com works similarly but requires you to name your own price. You are committed to the price once you name it so be aggressive in naming a great price in the first place. Hotels often only designate less desirable rooms to these discounters so don't be surprised if your room looks out over the parking lot, is next to the kitchen or right by the elevator. Be aware that a trick used by these hotels to increase their revenue on rooms sold through Priceline, Hotwire and other discounters is that upon arrival you may discover that you have to pay an additional fee for services you would think would be included in the room rate, like parking or "resort amenity fees". Even so, we continue to get great rates using Hotwire and have been very pleased with their services.

Case Study: We were planning a visit to Hawaii, arriving to Kahalui Airport in Maui and needed a hotel room. Hotwire described a hotel near the Kahalui airport, that had an exercise room and 200 guest rooms. A quick search using Google advanced search for Hotel, Kahalui, Hawaii, exercise room and you will discover that the hotel you are considering booking is the Maui Seaside Hotel in Kahalui. It turns out to be the only hotel in Kahalui with 200 rooms. When we priced the hotel by name, it came up as \$121 per night yet we were offered a rate of \$66 on Hotwire.



Case Study: We were traveling to Phoenix and needed a hotel room for three nights. We started watching Hotwire and realized that in the Phoenix market, the closer the date was to your travel date, the cheaper the rooms were selling for. Though we hate to wait until last minute to book rooms, we ended up getting a four star hotel for just \$59 per night by doing so.



Calling versus walk in rate: First of all if you find yourself needing a hotel right away, be sure to remember to mention if you are a member of an organization like AAA or AARP. Most better hotels offer discounts to members but you may have to show your current membership card. When you arrive at the front desk, you will have the best opportunity of getting a discount if other customers are not standing there too. Often hotels will offer a better rate over the phone than they will offer in person so sometimes it pays to call first and then walk in. If they quote you a higher rate as a walk in, tell them you just called and repeat the rate you'd gotten on the phone. Most front desk personnel have the ability to discount. Always ask for a discount. This works much of the time but expect little or no discount during busy times, holidays and weekends. If the hotel doesn't have many cars in the parking lot, expect to receive a discount. Most hotels don't want you to walk away. I often mention a lower rate I'd received from a competing hotel and ask if they will match that rate.

Hotel frequent guest programs: Many hotels and chains offer frequent guest programs and loyalty clubs much like airline frequent flier programs. Many of these chains represent a number of hotel brands such as Starwood hotels, which includes Sheraton, Westin, Meridien, St. Regis & Four Points. Sign up for these programs in advance of your stay and be sure to mention your membership number while making your reservation or upon check in. Each stay accumulates points toward free stays. Members also often receive special deal notices through the mail or via email. Join as many as you like since there are no fees to join and free hotel stays accumulate quicker than you think. Some programs even offer a free night stay when you join.

Timeshares

Description: You own a deeded week or floating week in a given resort or group of resorts.

Timeshare got a bad reputation a while back when they first became popular. Some developers ended up in bankruptcy after selling some units within a development, leaving purchasers owning units that were foreclosed upon by the company that had financed the initial development. The net result was tighter regulation on timeshare developments that has done much to secure a buyer's investment.

Timeshares are typically sold by the developer, at prices ranging from 10k to 35k per unit week. The purchaser typically owns the rights to use one week of the unit, which is either fixed or floating. Owners also have the option of renting their unit, if a rental market exists or depositing their unit into a timeshare trade organization where they can then swap their unit for someone else's unit week, nearly anywhere on the planet. Timeshare owners typically pay an annual maintenance fee and/or taxes for the pro-rated portion of their ownership within the resort. Many timeshares have luxury amenities and most have full or partial kitchens, allowing owners and users to "cook at home" saving on the cost of meals while on vacation. Units are typically rated by color as to their desirability. Red weeks are high demand, yellow is medium demand and green is low demand. You should buy only red weeks if you intend to trade them through Interval International or RCI. Interval often gives you two weeks in trade in exchange for depositing one red week to them. See www.intervalworld.com and www.RCI.com

Timeshare exchange companies are basically big clearing houses. They accept deposit weeks and dole out exchange weeks. You pay an annual fee to belong to most of these organizations but there are some great benefits to the frequent traveler, baby boomer or retiree. Due to the large number of weeks these organizations receive, many weeks end up never used. For example if you own a week in Cape Cod in the winter (I don't know why anyone would but they do) the unit will likely sit empty instead of being used. The owner of such a week deposits it into Interval or RCI, who gives the owner a week of exchange elsewhere. That owner's week has a fairly weak exchange value, due to it being a winter week in low season however since Interval gets many more weeks deposited to them than requests to use deposited weeks, Interval can often offer a better trade to the person who deposited an undesirable week, simply due to the excess of inventory they receive. You are taking your chances however, owning low season weeks, and you may not get very good trades as a result. Furthermore the number of bedrooms in your unit also determines trading power. If you own a studio, you may have a hard time getting a one bedroom or two bedroom unit in exchange. I recommend owning a one bedroom red week in a resort that has low fees. Then trade this unit each year into Interval, paying

attention to the fact that they sometimes offer deals to encourage you to deposit your week, such as a week of exchange, plus a bonus week. Typically the bonus week must be used within a year of the exchange, versus your straight deposit week, which has a trade window of up to three years.

Getaway weeks: Belonging to one of the timeshare organizations has other privileges such as discount travel booking, discount cruises, etc.... By far the best benefit is being able to use their "Getaway Weeks". Since these organizations end up with more inventory than actually gets used, many weeks end up sitting empty, such as the Cape Cod week in January. In order to get some value from this inventory, the swap organizations have set up a program where for a minimal fee you can "buy" the rights to use weeks that they don't think anyone will want to trade for. The cost is often ridiculously cheap, depending on the location and season. This is a great opportunity to stay in wonderful resorts for much less than you'd pay to rent a suite there. You pay a flat fee for the week and get a fully furnished suite in a great location. If you have time to travel, don't mind visiting a place somewhat off season and have flexibility on where you want to go, getaway weeks can't be beat. You have to be a member of these organizations to be eligible to use the getaway weeks. RCI offers them as does Interval International.

Case study: We stayed at Paradise Village in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico. We paid \$299 for a Getaway week through Interval International for a one bedroom ocean view suite. We did not use any week in trade, we merely paid \$299 for the complete 7 day getaway week. I imagine owners in this unit paid more than that per week in maintenance fees alone. A paid hotel guest staying there told me they had paid \$155 per night for their stay.



The secondary market for timeshare: Many people's lives change, resulting in them no longer needing or wanting their timeshare. Though many timeshares have an in-house resale program, the real trick is to buy units on the secondary market, ideally directly from the present owner. The best place to look for these units is places like Ebay, Craigslist or the host of timeshare resale companies. Most timeshare resale companies charge a flat fee for listing your unit and provide advertising in major publications like USA Today. These resale companies don't care much whether they sell your unit, they are in the \$300 business (or however much they charge for their services) and they prey on timeshare owners looking to sell their units. They are generally not a great way to sell a timeshare but sometimes can be beneficial since many provide closing services including the use of their in-house attorneys. I listed two units through one of these companies but found my buyer using ebay. I then facilitated the sale with the help of the timeshare resale company I had contracted for service with.

On Ebay you can often find timeshare weeks selling for \$500 or less per unit week. I recommend buying a one bedroom red week that has low maintenance fees. Ask about the annual fees before you buy since they vary quite a bit. You might consider buying a unit that is located near where you live since most timeshares allow you to use the facilities during any week of the year, not just during your deeded week. Sometimes you can even find timeshare units being given away for free from people who just want to get out of the obligation of paying the annual maintenance fees and taxes associated with owning the unit. Again check Ebay for deals but be aware of the important things, size of unit, week of ownership, etc that may affect your ability to rent the unit or it's trading power through Interval or RCI. If you live in a resort area or a town where a timeshare is located, watch your local papers since often times foreclosed units are sold on the courthouse steps to the highest bidder. If the timeshare in question has a bunch of "resort owned" units already, they may have no interest in bidding on the unit.

Case Study: My sister and brother in-law bought a timeshare in Mashpee, MA, just down the road from where they live, paying less than \$500 for it on the secondary market. They trade their unit week and travel somewhere else but they take their two young daughters to the pool and playground at their home resort all the time. The resort has a heated indoor pool and hot tub that are a real pleasure in the winter months for the whole family. This is an extra dividend for them since they live so close to their timeshare unit. As an additional bonus they regularly use the facility's gym.



Time Share Tours: When developers are selling timeshare, they often offer incentives for attending their timeshare tour. These incentives can be quite attractive ranging from free attraction tickets to places like Disney, dinner cruise tickets or even a free weekend stay in their resort. These tours require that both you and your wife or significant other have a minimum of income and typically attend a 90 minute presentation. These pitches are good so be prepared to say no, no matter how good it sounds. Remember that timeshare is always cheaper on the secondary market. Tell the sales person that you have no intention of buying and you might get out of there in less than the full 90 minutes but don't be rude. If you have nothing else to do, you sometimes get great stuff for taking the tour. Remember that it is never the best way to buy a timeshare directly from the developer or sales company selling through time share tours. You will nearly always get a much better deal through the secondary market found on places like Ebay, Craigslist or even your local penny saver magazine, Want Advertiser or local classifieds.

Some Definitions

Timesharing - A term used to describe a method of use and/or shared ownership of vacation real estate where purchasers acquire a period of time (often one week) in a condominium, apartment or other type of vacation accommodation. Timeshare is also known as “vacation ownership.”

Exchange Company - The system that allows timeshare owners to trade the accommodations they own for comparable accommodations for travel-related services. Most resort companies are affiliated with an exchange company. Many resort companies offer an internal exchange mechanism that allows owners to exchange to resorts within their company’s portfolio of resorts.

Vacation Club - A term used to describe various types of timesharing and usually involving use or access to more than one resort location and other vacation and travel services. However, the term is used for many different purposes, including “clubs” which may have nothing to do with timesharing.

Lock-off - A type of timeshare unit consisting of multiple living and sleeping quarters designed to function as two discrete units for purposes of occupancy and exchange. The unit can be combined to form one large unit or can be split or “locked-off” into two or more separate units, allowing the owner to split the vacation into multiple stays or bank all or a portion for exchange purposes.

Banking - Depositing a week of timeshare into an exchange system or inventory pool.

Points Conversion Program - An offering whereby owners of a timeshare interval(s) pay(s) a fee to convert their interval for the equivalent in points.

Points - A symbolic measurement related to a timeshare ownership that is used to establish value for seasons, unit sizes, and resort locations. Points are used by developers for both internal and external exchange.

Maintenance Fee - A fee that timeshare owners are required to pay, usually on an annual basis, to cover the costs of running the resort, including daily management, upkeep, and improvements.

Rescission - Sometimes called a “cancellation” or “cooling off” period. A period of time during which a consumer has the right to cancel a purchase contract and obtain a full refund of his/her deposit with no penalty. Dictated by state statute and company policy, rescission periods vary from state to state, but range on average from 5 to 7 days. This is another example of the strong consumer protections built into timeshare sales.

Cruises

Cruise Ship Discounts: Most people end up paying close to full price for cruises primarily because they need to book airfare to the departure port as well as book a ticket on the cruise. When you have two restrictions limiting your choices, cheap airfare AND cheap cruise tickets, your search becomes much more limited. What many people do not realize is there are options to the departure locations available to popular cruise destinations, which sometimes offer significantly cheaper prices. Cruise ports are located in a variety of cities from Portland, Maine to San Diego, California. In Florida alone, cruises depart from Cape Canaveral, Fort Lauderdale, Miami, and Tampa.

My favorite site is www.vacationstogo.com which offers a 90 day countdown ticker of cruises, although there are many others that offer the same service. If a cruise is under sold and nearing its departure date, sites like Vacations To Go offer discounted rates during the last 90 days before departure. As with the airlines, registering on each cruise lines website allows the user to set up “fare alerts”. I have found that the best cruise prices are not sold directly by the cruise line, but instead by cruise consolidators and discounters. The cruise lines prefer this method to avoid undercutting their own pricing structure on future cruises.

The cheapest per night cruises are typically what are known as repositioning cruises. These cruises are aboard ships changing their cruising destinations. Examples include ships leaving the Caribbean to travel to the Mediterranean for the summer season. These cruises travel from point A and end up at point B, unlike most cruises which end where they originated. The cruise lines offer low fares on these cruises since most passengers will need two one way trip tickets to take advantage of these routes. Repositioning cruises often spend most of their time at sea so if you want to see a bunch of ports, these cruises may not be for you.

Most cruises make much of their money on drinks. As a result, most cruise lines do not allow you to bring liquor onboard a cruise. They even often x-ray bags as they are loaded onboard. We’ve found that the new plastic liquor bottles are not usually detected and we carry a sport cup in our luggage, which we use to make cocktails in our room. We can then carry them throughout the ship without having to pay high prices for our drinks. You may not be allowed to do this so do so at your own risk. The worst that will happen is they will take the liquor away from you. Most cruise lines allow you to bring one or two bottles of wine but check with the cruise line before hand if you are concerned.

Ship Excursions: Most cruises sell excursions at the various ports of call you will visit. These excursions depart from the ship and are led by various tour companies working on behalf of the ship. We have found that with a bit of advanced planning you can save a

lot of money on these excursions by doing them on your own. Check the cruise itinerary before you leave and see what excursions are offered. Then using the Internet, see if there are tour operators at the various ports where you are stopping that offer the same tour for less money. For the daring, try taking a taxi or better yet, public transportation to the same destination that the ship excursion will visit, saving big money, especially if you have a large family.

Case Study: While on a Royal Caribbean cruise to St. Thomas, the ship offered an excursion tour to visit St. John's for the day, which visited Trunk Bay and the downtown shopping area in St John's. The shore excursion cost \$35 per person. We had a group of 3 couples and did the tour ourselves. We left the ship in the morning and flagged a taxi to the ferry terminal to St John's. We took the ferry across to St. John's and then hopped an open air island van taxi to Trunk Bay. We snorkeled at the park using the rental gear available at the Trunk Bay and then taxied back to the downtown area, where we ate lunch. We shopped for a while, followed by cocktails by the beach. A short ferry ride back and a taxi back to the ship. Total cost per person for the excursion was less than \$10 per person and we didn't have to wait for the crowd on the ship run excursion.



We have taken local taxis to “swim with the stingrays” in Grand Cayman, ferried to Anguila for the day while visiting St Maarten, swam in the caves at Xcaret, Mexico while onboard a Carnival cruise, visited San Francisco beach and the downtown area in Cozumel all without ever paying for a ship run excursion. Obviously you need to be back before the ship departs and there are some tours you won't be able to put together on your own, but a majority of the tours offered by the cruise line are easily duplicated.

Port of Departure Discounts: Since cruise lines don't make any money on empty rooms, most cruise lines offer last minute boarding on the day of departure at a deep discount rate. You have to be at the port of departure, car parked, passport in hand and bag packed and ready to go. Most cruise lines will offer you the best available cabin for the lowest ticketed price, even if the price was for a much lower class cabin. Remember that room attendants, waiters, excursion personnel, gift shop managers, etc... will not make any money on an empty room. Getting on last minute cruises works great on all but the busiest of cruise weeks. It will not work at times like Christmas week, school vacation week, Easter, or other holiday weeks since the cruise lines are not apt to have available vacancies.

Case Study: My mom, daughter, wife and myself stood on the pier at the Port of Miami on a cool Saturday morning in January. Carnival, Royal Caribbean, Celebrity and Norwegian Cruise lines all had cruises departing that morning. Our preference was for the Royal Caribbean cruise but since this was shortly after 9/11, Royal Caribbean had recently instituted a policy requiring all passengers to be on the passenger manifest 24 hours prior to a cruise departure. We headed down the dock to the Carnival berth and boarded a cruise for the eastern Caribbean, stopping in Key West, Cozumel and Playa Del Carmen/Calica, Mexico. We paid \$199 per person versus the published fare of \$849 for the cruise. Our best deal ever was \$299 per person on Norwegian Cruise lines "Norway" for a 7-day cruise to the western Caribbean, leaving from the Port of Miami.



Cruise Ship Concerns: Cruise ships move a lot of people and spend very little time between cruises being cleaned. Over the years, there have been numerous outbreaks of flu-like illnesses on cruise ships. Norwalk disease is one of the more common illnesses. www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/submenus/sub_norwalk.htm gives a pretty good description of the disease. Most ship bourn illnesses are the result of uncleanliness. Wash your hands often and avoid touching things like handrails. We bring a container of Clorox "bleach wipes" with us on cruises and wipe down all the surfaces in our room when we arrive, paying special attention to things like door handles, drawer knobs and bathroom sinks. Though the room will appear clean when you arrive, it is likely crawling with tiny organisms just waiting to ruin your vacation. The CDC site also provides a complete section on vessel sanitation with a list by cruise ship line and ship name.

<http://wwwn.cdc.gov/vsp/InspectionQueryTool/Forms/InspectionGreenSheetRpt.aspx>
Some ships are cleaner than others but with a little care you should not have a problem.

Being on your Honeymoon while traveling: If you are traveling on your honeymoon, anniversary etc, let the hotel know before you arrive. They will often supply complimentary champagne to your room, flowers or other gifts. You'll get bad karma if you use this tip and it is not really your honeymoon....

Free Drinks in Vegas: Many casinos provide free drinks to high stakes clientele. To get free drinks, find a high stakes slot machine, one that costs \$5 to \$10 to play. Put money in the machine but don't pull the lever. When a waitress comes by give her your drink order. When the drink arrives, push the "cash out" button on the machine and take your money and the free drink. You can also employ this trick at the tables by buying in on a table but never placing a bet. I prefer the slot machines since you don't have a person sitting there watching you and you are not taking a seat from a potential player.

Using expensive hotel amenities: When staying at a cheap hotel or other lodging you can often pack a swimsuit in a bag or wear it under your clothes and stroll on over to the expensive hotel to use their pool and other amenities. You may need a key to get a towel but you can always go without or bring one with you. My mom and uncle rent a cheap house in Puerto Rico near the Dorado Hilton and regularly use their pool. Buy a few drinks and no one seems to mind.

Safety while traveling: Though nearly all travel is incident free and without problems, be aware while traveling. We have traveled in many parts of the world and have never had a problem but we stay out of areas that we should not be in and don't venture into sketchy areas after dark. If a situation looks shady, get out of there. Be cautious of strangers and careful with your belongings. Do not leave luggage or other valuables visible in a rental car while you are not in it. Keep your car doors locked while traveling. If you have a problem with the car, be cautious of people offering to help you. Be careful with your money and your wallet. When in a crowded area, keep your wallet in a front pocket. Women should keep their purses close to their body and in a secure grasp. Keep an arm through a back pack strap whenever possible. Snatch and grab happens in an instant.

Also be aware of pickpockets. Typically the professional pickpocket works with an assistant, who creates a diversion or bumps into their victim while the pickpocket is skillfully removing their wallet. Keeping rubber bands around your wallet in both directions makes it more difficult to pickpocket. Money belts are a worthwhile investment. They come in a variety of styles. I use a belt type worn under my pants. Keep a sufficient amount of cash in your pocket so you don't have to go into your money belt in public. I keep sufficient cash in my pocket to satisfy a robber, with the bulk of my money in the money belt. With the advent of ATM's it is no longer necessary to carry much cash with you. Travelers Checks have also become less useful as it has become much easier to access money throughout the world through ATM's.

Exchanging money: The best exchange rates are usually found within the country you are visiting. Don't bother exchanging money in the US, prior to your arrival in a foreign country. Most major international airports have 24 hour money changing services run by banks or sanctioned money changers. Changing money in the US prior to your arrival to a foreign country is costly. Banks offering this service must make money for holding a bunch of foreign currencies in cash, so they pass this cost onto you. These days credit cards and ATM cards are widely accepted worldwide. Visa is the most widely accepted card, with Mastercard and American Express your second choice. Traveler's checks, preferably issued by a VERY WELL KNOWN company like American Express, are also an option. Some countries don't like traveler's checks however so you will only be able to cash them at banks. This can be a hassle. Be sure to carry the receipts for your traveler's checks in a location other than with the checks. You need the receipt to get stolen checks reissued. Report stolen traveler's checks right away. If you do plan on buying travelers checks, there are a number of places where you can do so without a fee. If you are traveling to remote destinations and you must buy travelers checks, AAA auto club members get commission free travelers checks so if you plan on exchanging much money, it might be worth joining AAA just to save the fees of purchasing travelers checks. Fees sometimes run one or two percent of the amount of money you are exchanging into travelers checks.

Speaking of AAA, the cost of membership to AAA is often saved quickly through discounts offered to members. Your membership fee might be less than a discount given on just one vacation or hotel stay. AAA members receive a variety of travel related discounts, see www.aaa.com.

Other Travel Tips:

Travel Warnings: We check both the state department and online inquiry about any new destination we plan on visiting. It is best to be aware of any goings on that might affect your visit. Political, social and economic unrest can have a disturbing result on your vacation. It is best to check before you go to see if anything is worth being aware of. Check http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis_pa_tw_1168.html and check country specific incidents as a precaution. It is also a good idea to know the passport and visa requirements of any country you might be visiting before you get there. Check with the consulate of the country you are visiting for up to date requirements. Also check any health travel warnings and visit a travel clinic if necessary before you go. Certain countries require vaccinations or other medications in order to enter the country. Proof as to the timeliness of these vaccinations may also be required.

State Department and the Center for Disease Control Warnings: Before heading out to your lifelong dream trip, check www.state.gov and check out the status of where you plan to go. The State Department lists travel advisories on areas they consider danger-

ous or potentially unhealthy. Also check out www.cdc.gov/travel to see if there are any suggested or required vaccinations necessary prior to visiting the areas you plan to visit. Some vaccinations take time to complete so if your heart is set on traveling the Amazon by canoe, you might want to visit a travel clinic, found in many major hospitals, to see what precautions are warranted or required before you go. Also be aware that if you plan on visiting the tropics, many less developed countries still have a variety of diseases and mosquito bourn illnesses that you probably don't want. Sleeping on the beach in third world tropical climates might send you home with more than you bargained for. Consult the consulate of any country you plan on visiting to see what vaccinations or inoculations are required.

Travel Review Sites: A great way to judge a hotel, meal or attraction is to visit one of the travel review sites. These sites are a place where customers can rate their experience at a hotel, restaurant or attraction. The largest such site is www.tripadvisor.com but also check www.we8there.com and www.Igoyougo.com for additional reviews. These sites rely on information provided by the traveling public so if you had a particularly good or bad experience on your trip, be sure to tell the world by posting your review. It is easy to post and only takes a minute or two. Some establishments have been accused of posting their own reviews in an attempt to manipulate their ratings. Tripadvisor will often make note of companies that they have discovered were posting reviews on their own establishment. We regularly check the reviews of hotels we are considering on Tripadvisor before booking them. You may find the hotel is currently undergoing renovation or in a huge construction project. Keep in mind, some people are just never happy and are more likely to complain than happy people are to rave about a travel experience. Don't let one or two bad reviews cloud your judgement. Look at the overall feedback.

Travelers Guide Books: Don't plan an extensive trip without consulting one of the many travel guidebooks. These books provide tons of information on what, where, when, how and why you want to go. Most provide recommendations and ratings on hotels, restaurants, transportation and activities. Check your local library or look on Ebay or www.Amazon.com but be aware that an old guide book, though better than no guidebook at all, may have outdated information. Many places listed may no longer be in business and things like rates will likely have increased. See www.LonelyPlanet.com, www.Frommers.com, www.Moon.com, www.letsgo.com and www.roughguides.com. There are a host of others, some specific to the country you are visiting, so check the internet in the course of your research.

Travel Writing – A popular way to fund your nomadic need for travel is to try your hand at travel writing. Check with the library or online to learn the ins and outs of this business but be wary of companies wanting to sell you expensive courses or “how to” books

on travel writing. Be realistic with your talents if you think you can write. Be sure you have a good grasp of the English language and know the basics of marketing, since you will have to sell your services to be successful. If you think you have the talent, give it a try.

If you are really interested in free travel, consider starting a tour club or working for the travel industry. You can start your own tour club or sell packages for travel wholesalers and tour operators. Many charter organizations are always looking for guides or tour hosts to escort travel groups. Look at tours offered to high schools and contact the companies that offer these tours. They are easily located using the internet. I volunteer with a tour company www.trainsunlimitedtours.com which organizes and operates antique train tours worldwide. As a guide, all of my travel expenses are paid for and I get to be part of the tour that our customers pay a lot of money to experience.

Travel agents, airline personnel and couriers receive free or discounted tickets, deeply discounted hotels and other valuable benefits. Consider working for either if your heart beckons a life of travel.

In conclusion: Travel can be very rewarding and need not cost a fortune. Hopefully through using some of the tips and techniques outlined here, you too can enjoy travel on a shoe string. If you have any feedback to offer, additional tips, pointers or unusual experiences you would like to share, please contact me to do so. Who knows, maybe I'll print your experience in the next edition of this e-book or even in the print version soon to follow.

Happy Travels!

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Useful Websites

Airline World	www.airlineworld.net
AirlineConsolidator.com	www.airlineconsolidator.com
AirSaver	www.airsaver.com
Airtimetable.com	www.airtimetable.com
Airtran	www.airtran.com
Alaska Air	www.alaskaair.com
American Airlines	www.aa.com
Amtrak	www.amtrak.com
Auto Driveaway	www.autodriveaway.com
Bed and Breakfast List	www.bnblast.com
Bed & Breakfast Online	www.bedandbreakfast.com
Bed and Breakfast.com	www.bedandbreakfast.com
Bid&Vacations.com	www.bid4vacations.com
BnB Finder.com	www.bnbfinder.com
Booking Wiz	www.bookingwiz.com
Centers for Disease Control	www.cdc.gov
Cheap Tickets	www.cheaptickets.com
CIEE	www.ciee.org
Continental Airlines	www.continental.com
Craig's List	www.craigslist.com
Delta Airlines	www.delta.com
Ebay	www.ebay.com
Eurail	www.eurail.com
Expedia	www.expedia.com
Family Motor Coach Association	www.fmca.com
Fare Compare	www.farecompare.com
FareChase	www.farechase.yahoo.com
Fox Rent A Car	www.foxrentacar.com
Frommers	www.frommers.com
Good Sam Club	www.goodsamclub.com
Google	www.google.com
Greyhound	www.greyhound.com
Hawaiian Airlines	www.hawaiianair.com
Home Away	www.homeaway.com
Hostels.com	www.hostels.com
Hotwire	www.hotwire.com

IgoUgo	www.igougo.com
Interval International	www.intervalworld.com
ITN	www.itn.net
Jet Blue	www.jetblue.com
Kayak	www.kayak.com
Last Minute Travel	www.lastminutetravel.com
Lets Go	www.letsgo.com
Lonely Planet	www.lonelyplanet.com
Lowest Fare	www.lowestfare.com
Midwest Airlines	www.midwest.com
Moon Travel Guides	www.moon.com
MoveCars.com	www.movecars.com
Northwest Airlines	www.nwa.com
OAG Travel	www.oag.com
Orbitz	www.orbitz.com
Parks Canada	www.pccamping.ca
Perfect Places	www.perfectplaces.com
Priceline	www.priceline.com
Quicktrip.com	www.quicktrip.com
RCI	www.rci.com
Rent A Wreck	www.rentawreck.com
Rental Car Momma	www.rentalcarmomma.com
RentalCodes.com	www.rentalcodes.com
Rough Guides	www.roughguides.com
Southwest Airlines	www.southwest.com
STA Travel	www.statravel.com
Travel Cuts	www.travelcuts.com
Travelocity	www.travelocity.com
Travelweb	www.travelweb.com
Trip Advisor	www.tripadvisor.com
Trip.com	www.trip.com
United Airlines	www.united.com
United Airport Parking	www.unitedairportparking.com
US Airways	www.usairways.com
US National Forest Campground Guide	www.forestcamping.com
US National Park Service	www.nps.gov/findapark/
Vacation Rentals By Owner	www.vrbo.com
Vacations to Go	www.vacationstogo.com

